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*My Journey  
With Jesus*



Autobiography of  
Lois Gerig Hetmansperger







# *My Journey With Jesus*

*Autobiography of*

*Lois Gerig Hetmansperger*



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## Introduction

Over the years a number of folks have suggested that I record some of the special ways God has led me. More recently Ann Butler (nee Anna May Greenfield), our Gideon Auxiliary Vice President, gave all of us members a journal book in which we could record prayer requests or any special things we wanted to remember. However, when she gave me mine, she made a request that I write my life story in it. She has checked several times since to see if I have started. Tonight, August 31, 2005, I am starting. She will be happy to know.

I am writing on notebook paper, however, since the book she gave me is too small. My life has been so busy that there hasn't been time for writing diaries. This will be like a delayed diary of sorts.

Now that I'm getting started, I'm taking time to go back to "before my beginning." I will also add some pictures to make my story more interesting.



## My Journey Begins

It was June 12, 1917 when Dr. Shook made a hurried horse and buggy trip from Spencerville to the country home of Menno and Zula Gerig to assist in bringing me into the world. Eighteen months earlier, he had made the same four mile trip when my sister Eunice was born. There were to be seven more trips for six baby boys and a final baby girl. However, times were getting easier as the automobile entered the picture.

### God Speaks to Little Girls

God speaks to little girls – and to little boys too – just as surely as He speaks to big folks. I learned years ago that He wants to speak to each of us, if we are wanting to listen. And His methods of speaking are just as different as our fingerprints. There are no two alike. That has always amazed me!

Early on, He knew that I wanted to listen. I knew that I wasn't smart enough to plan my own life. Recently I heard a similar thought put like this: If we knew all the facts, we'd always choose God's way. And again: He made me and knows what will make me happy. I can trust Him!

One way He spoke to me was through His Word, the Bible. Was it providential that Aunt Alice, my first Sunday School teacher, gave me Psalm 25:4 to memorize? It is really a prayer for guidance. "Show me thy way, O Lord; teach me thy paths." I have never forgotten it. It has become my life's prayer, and God has answered it many times and in many ways.

My sister Eunice and I used to lie out on the grass in our front lawn watching the beautiful, fluffy white clouds quickly change their shapes. I would think: "If God can do that to those great big clouds, surely He will be with me through the changes of my life."

And He has spoken His Way to me through my parents and grandparents. Since they have so greatly influenced me, my story would not be complete without a peek into their lives.



Lois and Eunice



### Gerig Family

My Grandpa and Grandma Gerig both were of German decent. They lived in Alsace Lorraine, France when they were very young. Both of their fathers were preachers in the Amish church. Grandpa's father was also a weaver and Grandma's father was a part-time farmer.

Through their friends, they heard of the religious liberties to be enjoyed in America. Each of these families decided to leave their homeland for a new country across the sea. Grandma's family came in 1852 when she was almost four years old.

Grandpa's family came in 1853 when he was nine.

They and the groups they came with had to dispose of the goods they could not take on the ship. At that time only a limited amount of money could be taken out of France. In the sailboats of that day, it took from 30 to 60 days to cross the Atlantic. They had to furnish the food and prepare their own meals.

Some days the wind was contrary and their boat was driven far off course. Sometimes they were in danger of reefs and rocks. At other times sickness brought fear and sorrow. Some days when the ocean was very rough those on deck would get drenched. One man passed away en route. They wrapped his body in a cloth sack and sent him to his watery grave. Every day they prayed that God would bring them to their desired haven.

Grandpa's family had a unique and frightening experience. After 40 days and 40 nights of sailing on the calm and rough seas, they landed safely in the harbor in New York, only to discover that their trunks had been stolen. They searched for many days. The man who hid them helped in the hunt. After they found them, he made a quick getaway.

They were still a long way from their destination. They traveled by covered wagon to Erie, Pennsylvania. The roads were rough, but they followed the trails across the plains and dense forests. From Toledo they traveled the Wabash and Erie Canal to Fort Wayne. The boat was pulled by mules. Three miles an hour was a good speed. Fort Wayne was a happy sight after 3 or 4 days in a small uncomfortable boat, living on food prepared by the cook whose very appearance made them nauseous – and sleeping or trying to sleep in a position in which they could hardly expect a dog to be comfortable. There were still 14 miles of rough roads. They had to walk and carry their baggage the rest of the way.



Grandma Gerig and Aunt Josephine

They purchased a 240-acre tract of land that was covered with timber. Their first home was a log cabin. Farming methods were very primitive. By the sweat of their brows, they ate their bread, built their cabins, and made crude benches and tables. They hunted wild game for their meat and for fur. They made their clothing, shoes, candles, brooms, and nearly all the utensils of everyday use.

These pioneers trusted in God to help and prosper their toils. The men made use of their strong arms. Their wives very ably assisted them, and God answered their prayers.

Bishop Joseph Gerig, our Grandma's father, continued preaching in the Amish church till a Defenseless Mennonite Church was started in the area. He and his family became charter members. He was at once the leading minister of that church located one mile east of Leo. He served the church till his death. Noah E. Grabill gave us the only word picture we have in his tribute entitled My Old Home Church. "Our pastor, Father Gerig, was a pleasant man with a long white, flowing beard, looking like an old patriarch man. He wore a long, black Prince Albert coat which became him well; and we boys respected him almost as an angel, I may tell."

Years later when the Missionary Church was started, Grandma who was then a widow became a charter member there.

The roads were very bad most of the year. My Great Grandpa would hitch the team to a heavy spring wagon and take the family to church, often going through mud or rough frozen ground, but they always got there in good time. When it was impossible to drive, he would go by horseback or walk. He was also faithful in visiting the members of his congregation, always inquiring how they were getting along in their Christian experience.

Their oldest child, my Grandma Josephine, married Jacob Gerig when she was only 16. They had 13 children. My father was only 2½ years old when his father died. Aunt Josephine was only 6 months.

Grandpa died of pneumonia, which was probably caused by frequent buggy or horseback rides to Fort Wayne in severely cold weather. He had no way of knowing how cold it was, since there were no thermometers in those pioneer days. Before he died he told Grandma that he had the witness that all of their children would accept Jesus as their Savior. He had not only prayed for his children but his children's children. That took me in! With God's help, Grandma carried the burden of rearing this large family. My father was the last of the children to accept Jesus' forgiveness, and when he did his life was completely committed to Him.



It happened like this. There were revival meetings being held in a local church, and he attended every night. The Christians knew that this young man was resisting the Holy Spirit's wooing, and they prayed earnestly for his salvation. One afternoon the preacher and the evangelist came to visit the Gerig home. When he saw them coming he slipped out the back door. Could it be that this very act brought more conviction to his rebellious heart? That evening as he was in the barn doing the chores, he knelt by the cows and yielded to the Holy Spirit. There was great rejoicing in the service that night.

He wanted to make sure he pleased God in everything. He believed that the Bible teaches that Christians should give at least one tenth of their income to God's work. To be sure he pleased God, he tried to figure how much he had ever earned and he gave one tenth of that. Since he had used his wagon and horses to help build brick streets in Fort Wayne, he had made more than most country young men.

I'm sure God took note of this young man who totally wanted to follow Him. I know God doesn't expect us to give a tithe of all we have ever earned in our former life, but my father proved that we cannot out-give God.

A look into the future proved that God was faithful to His Word (Malachi 3:10). God was faithful in providing for his growing family of nine children and raising them on a small farm during the Great Depression.

His desire was to see all of his children accept Jesus while they were young – before they became “gospel hardened” like he had been. He also thought that, since Mother brought us into the family physically, it was his responsibility to make sure we were born into God's family. God granted his desires. All of us found Jesus as our Savior before we were nine years old. That was before Rev. Overholtzer, the founder of Child Evangelism Fellowship, discovered that children could be saved before they were 12 or 13. All nine of us have lived for Jesus – five have been in full-time Christian service.

And God took care of his financial needs too. When he turned 65, farmers weren't included in Social Security. However, 1½ years later, a new law was passed. Social Security would cover farmers. It also contained a clause saying that, if those who were already 65 and had been managing their farms would pay \$250 for back income tax, they could draw a monthly social security check for the rest of their lives. Father qualified! His nephew, Roy Sponhower, had been doing the farming for 1½ years, but Father had been doing the managing. Until he left us for heaven, he had no financial worries and he continued to give faithfully to God's work. You can be sure that he taught us that one penny

of the first time we got belonged to God. We all learned that lesson well!

Father was blessed physically too. He very seldom saw a doctor, and he was never a patient in a hospital. His prayer was that he would never have to go to a hospital or nursing home or that he would never need to live with any of his children. God granted his request. He died peacefully in his own bed while sleeping at the age of 97.

### Sponhower Family

That was a long peek into my father's family. We don't know as many details about my mother's family, so this will be a quicker peek.

Mother's family was also of German descent, coming to America earlier than the Gerig families. They settled in Pennsylvania. My Great Grandpa, Cyrus Sponhower, lived near the town of Lititz, Pennsylvania. His parents died when he was very young and he was "bound out" and learned the trade of shoemaking.

Cyrus came west and married Elizabeth Thorne. They started housekeeping on a farm four miles west of Spencerville. Later on, they moved to Spencerville where Cyrus ran a shoemaking shop. In a few years they moved back to the farm. They also built a nice frame house and barn on the opposite side of the road.

The Sponhowers were originally Lutherans. They would walk the 4 miles to the Spencerville Lutheran Church. However, when Hopewell United Brethren Church was organized only 1½ miles from their farm, they became members there.

A young girl, Cora Huffman, assisted Great Grandma Sponhower with her housework. During that time, their son Andrew and Cora began a friendship that later ended in marriage.

Cora's father, Charles Huffman, had come to Ohio from Pennsylvania in a covered wagon. He was a brick and stone mason and a farmer.

My Grandpa and Grandma Sponhower were faithful in church attendance. Grandpa was the song leader. He loved music. Sometimes he'd sing all the way home from prayer meeting.



Grandma & Grandpa Sponhower



In their home they daily read the Bible and prayed together. Their home was known as the Hopewell Hotel. Visiting preachers and missionaries often stayed with them.

A story Grandma used to tell verified the fact that they faithfully attended the Hopewell United Brethren Church. One Sunday morning Grandpa hitched the horse to the buggy and left it in the drive by the house while he went in to get the family. That horse went on to church and stopped where Grandpa always hitched him. People at the church realized the Sponhower horse and buggy had arrived without the family. Someone drove the horse back home to get them. That was one smart horse! He not only knew it was the Lord's Day, but he went to church!

Grandpa Sponhower must have had an adventuresome spirit. He had a problem with asthma and when a friend assured him that the sunny weather of Florida would help him feel better, he decided to try it. The next winter he accompanied this friend by train to New Port Richey, Florida. The warm sunshine did help him, so he decided to build a house. This he did, and the next winter he persuaded Grandma to go with him. For 25 years she went with him, always convincing us that it wasn't her idea. However, after Grandpa died, she continued to spend her winters in Florida. That "snowbird" fever had gotten into her blood! They evidently passed it on to some of their children and grandchildren who still migrate to the sunny south every winter.

### *My Mother and Father*

It was interesting how my mother and father found each other. Mother, like her father, loved music. Early on, she learned to play the pump organ. She must have been the Hopewell Church organist, because when the pastor, Rev. Clark, needed someone to help with the music in a revival at the Cedarville United Brethren Church (one of the 3 churches on his circuit) he asked her if she would help out. She willingly agreed. For two weeks she stayed in the Clark home.

A young man who faithfully attended those services got his eyes on the young organist that first night. As was his mother's custom, she invited the evangelistic party to her home for a meal. That gave this young man, Menno, a chance to get



Mother and Father

better acquainted with the organist. However, he waited till the last night to ask if he could take her home in his buggy. It must have been at least a 10 mile drive. That was the beginning of their romance and marriage that lasted for 57 years!

It was on that original Sponhower farm that they made their home. And it was there that their nine children were born. Mother had thought there might be 12. Even before she met my father, God had asked her if she was willing to have children. She had answered, "Yes, Lord, a dozen if it will help me to live closer to you." God must have thought nine was enough! There was Eunice, Lois, Paul, Matthias, Maurice, Zenas, Ardon, Dale and Adah Ruth.

The first few years of my life were centered around our home. We had no neighbor children to play with, but there were always brothers and sisters – and cousins who visited us often. We loved to play house.

The first playhouse we made was in a newly built pigpen – before the pigs were ready to occupy it. Mother wrote Bible verses all around the walls. Guess she thought a good atmosphere would keep us from quarreling.

My sister Eunice and I always worked and played together. One of our first jobs of importance was taking water to father when he worked in the fields. And, of course, as we grew older and a new baby boy came every few years, there was plenty to keep us busy. There were bottles and diapers and bottles and diapers! And the bigger the family became, there was more food to cook, dishes to wash, and laundry to do. I remember Eunice and I



Our family



Our farm home

used to prop a hymnal on the opened doors of the cook stove warming closet and sing and sing till the dishes were done. It probably took us longer, but it was more fun!

I heard Mother say that it was almost as easy to have nine children as it was to have one. That was because she was a good teacher and organizer. She taught each of us to work and assigned each of us jobs. A chart showed us our jobs – and a black mark showed if we failed to do it. That incentive worked pretty well.



## School Years

One memorable day in September 1923 when I was six, I started to school. My dinner pail was in one hand and my new tablet and pencil were in the other. I had looked forward to this day for weeks and months. The little red brick one-room school house had held more attraction to me since my sister had started to school two years earlier. I know she was glad for me to be walking beside her that morning. It was a long walk past thick woods, but there was always a sense of security when we were together. However, we had an even better source of security; Mother had reminded us that Jesus would take care of us.

Just before we left for school, after the chores were finished at the barn and breakfast was over, we always had family worship. When we were able to read, we children would each read a verse out of a promise box. Mother would read a devotional out of *Streams in the Desert*, and Father would read a portion from the Bible. Then we'd all kneel and, starting with the youngest who could talk, we would pray short prayers. Father thought children who could talk to each other were old enough to talk to God.

With this background, it wasn't surprising that at a very young age I accepted Jesus as my Savior. It happened like this. Eunice and I were supposed to be sleeping upstairs, but we weren't. It was storming outside and each bolt of thunder sent a deeper pang of conviction to my heart. It seemed like the house might fall down. It was the first time I realized that if I should die I wouldn't go to heaven. Eunice, who was 18 months older than I, had known this for some time. We started to cry. Soon Eunice suggested that we go down to Mother and Father. They would know how to help us. And they did.

As I remember it, Father met us at the bottom of the stairs saying, "I know what you girls want. I've been praying for you." Mother joined us, as we knelt by the chair near their bedroom door. It didn't take us long to claim God's promise: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:13). We kissed Mother and Father and went back upstairs. It was still thundering and lightening, but we went to sleep peacefully!

My first day in school had been a big day in my life, but this was a far more important day! I would have the presence and guidance of the Lord through the rest of my school days – and my life.

Our walks to school were always interesting. In the fall there were the beautiful colored leaves and delicious pears from the Boot's pear trees by the side of the road. We knew those falling on the roadside belonged to the public. That meant us. Every fall our

neighbor Jim Boots would visit our school with a basket full of delicious grapes. He would walk up and down the aisles and let us help ourselves. I wonder if he thought this would keep the school boys out of his vineyard.

In the winter when the ground was covered with snow and ice, we'd slide all the way to school.

But spring was the best time of all. The melting snow and spring rains would find their way through the fields and ripple their way over the banks of the ditches by the road. Each of us would claim one of these waterfalls as our own and name it. The culvert going across under the road was another place of amusement. When the water was high, we would float our dinner buckets through the culvert and rush to the other side to claim them. And, of course, there were always spring flowers.

Our school itself was as good as most one-room country schools, but how could a teacher handle eight grades efficiently? One thing, we could learn from the older grades, as we overheard their recitations.



### The Old Country School

The Auctioneer's chant brings an ache to my heart  
As the Old Country School has to go.  
For Old Country Schools are a thing of the past.  
But it's part of my childhood you know.

The little brass bell we dreaded to hear  
As it called the children from play  
It will bring a good price as the Auctioneer chants  
For it is an antique today.

The old desk with initials carved in the top  
By some school boy not minding his books  
Or perhaps he was dipping pigtailed in the ink  
Real quick, before teacher could look.



Homemade bread and jelly was standard fare then  
An apple and cookie we got  
And nobody worried it would ruin our health,  
Because the noon meal wasn't hot.

Germes were not discussed in those long ago days  
The water pail had one dipper for all  
And the coal stove, with its smoke and its fire,  
When chilly days came in the fall.

The games that we played, pump, pump, pull away.  
Hide and seek always found  
Or perhaps Fox and Geese when the weather was cold  
And snow had covered the ground.

The two little houses that sat in back always  
With words on the door, Girls and Boys.  
And many a secret was whispered inside  
As we shared all our sorrows and joys.

The bright sunny locks of the boys and girls then  
Now all have turned to gray  
And many have answered that final roll call  
But I see them in Memory today.

The old must give way for the new  
And that is the way it must be  
But the old Country School, tho' a thing of the past  
Holds many fond memories for me.

*Compliments of Headwaters Heritage Museum—Three Forks, Montana*

We were always glad when the Last Day program was over and we could spend a few months at home. Vacation was divided into three parts. First came Vacation Bible School (VBS). We walked the 1½ miles to the Hopewell United Brethren Church. We learned lots of Bible verses and even whole chapters of the Psalms. I still remember at least four Psalms. And I still remember the books of the Bible and lots of Bible verses. Noon hour was always interesting. Each of us had brought our own lunch. We would sit on the

ground in a big circle and after a prayer of thanks would eat our lunches. Each year a recital program would give the finishing touches to our studies.

When we were older, we went to VBS at Grabill Missionary Church too. We would stay with Aunt Ida and Uncle Sam Witmer for two weeks. We loved their beautiful oak open stairway. Every morning we were awakened by Aunt Ida playing “Onward Christian Soldiers” on their record player. That was really special for two country girls!

Then came the Huckleberry Season. Since our huckleberry marsh was the largest in our part of the country, it drew pickers from all around. Some came in cars and some with horse and buggies. Some came very early when it was just getting daylight, so they could find the biggest berries.

One day every summer, Uncle Jake would take us to Winona Lake Bible Conference – along with his girls, Carol Myrth and Joy. That was a big celebration. We could never forget the big white swan. When we got older, Uncle Jake would take us and our neighbor girl, Mildred McNamara, to Youth Night at the Grabill Missionary Church.



Huckleberry Pickers  
Ruthie, Lois, Ardon, Dale, Eunice  
and a little friend Beverly

Before we knew it, vacation was over and it was back to school again. The fall of 1932 was my first year at the Spencerville High School. That was the first year there was a school bus too. I majored in commercial subjects and Home Economics. I graduated with a class of 14 in 1935. Thus my school days flew by. That winter I helped out at home and worked on some of my hobbies.

When I was 13, the Lord spoke to me about being a missionary. Surely that would mean I would need to go to Bible School to prepare – but how could there be money for that with our large family living on a small farm during the Great Depression?

God’s ways are higher than ours! He had a plan! That July 1936 my cousin, Loyal Ringenberg and his wife Rhoda, had their first baby, a sweet little girl. They asked me if I could help them for two weeks after they brought the baby and her mother home from the hospital. I went, and while I was there Loyal told me there were students at Fort Wayne Bible Institute (where he was teaching) who couldn’t afford to stay in the dorms, so they worked in wealthy homes for their room and board, plus several dollars a week in cash.



And so it was on the morning of September 8, 1937 that Eunice and I found ourselves in the registration office of the Fort Wayne Bible Institute (now Taylor University Fort Wayne). We were each assigned a home to work in.

Four years later I graduated from the missions course. That covered college English, music, a number of Bible classes, plus the missions classes. My hardest subject was French. That made me quite sure that God didn't want me to go to a foreign field where I'd have to learn a new language.

A number of my new friends also worked in homes for their room and board. One of them was Velma Vernier. Velma told us, as we were walking home one day, that God had shown her she was to marry Milo Rediger. At that time they were just acquaintances. However, they did marry and for many years she was the wife of Milo Rediger, president of Taylor University Upland.

It was in my senior year that Anna Grenzabach came to the school to visit her sister Martha. Ann had been a home missionary in the Kentucky mountains for almost three years. The last ten months she had been alone. Miss Esther, her co-worker, had married and moved to Oklahoma with her new husband. He was a missionary to the American Indians.

Ann asked me if maybe the Lord was leading me to help her. She was praying for a helper who felt called to work with children. Working with children was definitely my burden. Since I had accepted Jesus as my Savior when I was so young and had known His guidance through my growing up years, I wished this for every boy and girl. This seemed to be just the right missions opportunity for me. Ann and I both felt that God had brought us together.

I had already told Florence Cavender that I would help her with a Vacation Bible School at the Hollywood Missionary Church, a few miles north of Fort Wayne. It was scheduled for June. I had to prepare my own lessons and handwork from scratch. My sister Eunice had just graduated from FWBI too and was still living with the Slick family where she had worked for her room and board those four years. Now she was also working in their family business in the office. She took time in the evenings to plan the pictures for my



A group of us "Outside" girls at FWBI

school children to color the next day. I couldn't have done it without her help. I had 13 children in my class. Florence and I rode the bus each day to the church.

One of the previous summers I had taught fourth grade children in a VBS at the First Missionary Church in Fort Wayne. One year I taught at Jackson Township, nearer my home. My brother Dale met his future wife, Beth Cornell, in my class. Dale was six and Beth was five. One summer I continued working for the family I worked for during the school year, the Strobels. We stayed in their lake cottage at Lake Wawasee. I took care of their girls, Pat and Sue, and we learned to swim. Another summer I had worked at General Electric in Fort Wayne.

Now this phase of my life was history. It was time to prepare for the next.



## Kentucky – A Big Turn in My Journey

I hurried home to prepare for an unknown future. I had never even seen a mountain. It was good to know that I wasn't going alone. God, who had opened the door, would stay by my side and make all the crooked places straight!

Back in those days, farmers used wooden crates for packing their eggs. I used two of these boxes for packing my things. They were then to be converted into a dressing table for my new home. Another wooden box was to be used for a seat for the dressing table. Mother made matching ruffled curtains for around them. I took a large board for the top.

I was going to what some called "the land of the do-without." It wasn't too hard for me, since I grew up in a large family during the Depression. I was definitely a faith missionary. Since God had opened the door, I could be sure that He would supply my needs. The only promise of income I had was one offering a month from the small youth group at the Auburn Missionary Church.

While I was still in school, God had proved to me in a tangible way that He not only knew my needs but also knew how to supply them. As I walked to an evening class one night, I reminded Him that I needed to write home but I didn't have the three cents to buy a stamp. The ground was covered with snow, except in spots where the sun had melted it. In one of those spots under a street light, three shiny pennies caught my attention! I knew God had placed them there for me. Not only was I able to write home, but also my faith in God's care and His ability to take care of my needs was increased.



Our hillside home in Garrard, Kentucky  
(Rev. Clauser visited us)

On July 13, 1940, my brother Paul's green Ford Coupe was packed for my first trip to Kentucky. Ann's sister, Martha, was spending the summer with her, so Flo Seimantel, a friend of mine from FWBI, was going to be my partner for the summer. She lived in the Aurora, Indiana area. Our first night we spent in her home. Her brother had a two-seated car, so plans were that he would take us the rest of the way. We reached Garrard, Kentucky, in Clay County on July 14!

Our Garrard, Kentucky Neighborhood



View of our home from the railroad track



View from our front window



The Garrard Coal Tipple



Garrard Depot and Post Office



Walter Turner shoeing a mule



Mule with corn on way to Mr. Turner's blacksmith-grist mill right next to our home



Our back yard was a sloping hill all the way. We leveled out a spot large enough for two chairs. Then we collected rocks from here and there in our travels in the country and made rock walks and rock steps all around our house, down to the front gate, back gate, and down to our outhouse.

A few years before we left, we dug a small trench up the hill from our landlord's well. We had been carrying our water up in a bucket all those years. In this trench we put PVC piping and connected it to our landlord's pump. We had running water right in our kitchen!



Ann and me in our backyard.



Ann and me at the London Hospital where we visited the patients weekly and distributed Christian literature



Flo (my partner the first summer) and me

### God Provides

And God was faithful in caring for my needs for 15½ years!

Each year while Eunice and I were students at FWBI, our parents had sold two of their best heifers and given us the money. They continued doing this for me.

God used friends and relatives who sent money from time to time. We took a two-week vacation at Christmas and again after our Vacation Bible Schools were finished in the spring. This gave me opportunity to speak in area churches or women's missionary groups. They would take up an offering.

The biggest checks I ever received came from England. My brother Paul was there in the Air Force during World War II. He and some other Christian soldiers met in a home for a Bible Study. They sang and had prayer before the Bible study. One night one of the guys said something was missing. He said, "It seems we should take up an offering." Another said, "But what would we do with the money?" That gave Paul an idea and he said, "I have a sister doing home missionary work in the Kentucky mountains who is trusting God to supply her needs." They all agreed that there would be an offering and that it would be sent to Paul's sister. When they collected \$50, they sent a check. What a surprise that was for me! And before the war was over, they had sent three more checks.

Paul shared with me that this Christian couple in whose home they met worked with children. In England they hadn't even heard of flannel graph visuals for Bible story telling. That was something I could do to show my appreciation! I painted flannel backgrounds and sent them Child Evangelism pictures and lesson guides for stories on the Life of Christ.

God had a way of making our money stretch. A Christian mechanic, Cecil Corum, did our car repairs for the cost of the parts. We had a garden. It was on the sunny side of the mountain, so it produced earlier than any other garden in the area. We canned vegetables and fruit. And the folks in our Sunday School communities shared with us. Sometimes it was milk, homemade butter, maybe vegetables, and occasionally a live chicken.

Taylor Smith, our landlord, though he wasn't a church-going man, knew that these Sunday School teachers would be an asset in the county. He charged us only \$4 a month rent. That may have been enough to pay the taxes. Taxes would have gone up when years later he had the building wired for electricity. Our rent went up to \$8.

I remember one winter Sunday we had driven as far as we could to the Hector



Sunday School. It was just a creek road and sometimes the water was too deep to chance it, or there was too much snow and ice. We had parked and walked on to the schoolhouse. As we were walking back after Sunday School, Mrs. Spurlock, whose children were in our Sunday School, came walking down the hill from their log cabin home carrying a live chicken. She said, "Would it make you mad if I gave you a chicken?" We said, "No, it would make us glad!" The rest of the way to the car we carried a flopping chicken.

Killing live chickens was another story. Ann came from a family of six girls and three boys. In my family it was just the opposite – six boys and three girls. That meant that she had done a lot more outside work than I, including killing chickens. When it came my turn, I tried to be brave, but it was one of the hardest things I had ever done. We would put the chicken's head on a block of wood and used an axe. One time when I failed to make a clean cut and the chicken went jumping around with its head half off, I told Ann, "From now on, if you'll kill the chicken, I'll do all the rest." That meant scalding it, picking all the feathers and cutting it up. Ann was pleased to comply. To her, she got the good end of the deal.

### Sisters Together Again

During our growing up years, my sister Eunice and I were almost never separated. Some folks thought we were twins. Often Mother made us dresses alike. We weren't really separated even during the four years we were students in Fort Wayne. We had lived in different homes but we each had a telephone available and we'd see each other at school five days a week. In God's plan we were to be close to each other again!

Elsie Swan and Clara Krueger were Sunday School teachers in Clay County like Ann and I. They worked one half of the county and we the other. We all lived in the mining town of Garrard. There was just a little hill, our landlord's house, and a coal tippie between us. However, Clara got cancer and had to go home to Minnesota. That left Elsie alone. She asked me if my sister Eunice might be interested in coming down to help her. She was.



Elsie & Eunice



Sunday School Teachers  
Eunice, Elsie, Lois, Ann

Eunice and I had missed being together for the six years I was in Kentucky. This gave us the opportunity to be close again. For almost ten years Eunice and Elsie were co-workers in Sunday Schools, rural school visitation, youth camp, and Vacation Bible Schools just like Ann and I were.

We all kept so busy that sometimes we'd not see each other all week, but we knew the other was nearby. And our postmistress, Mrs. Cody, would let us read our weekly letter from Mother and then put it in the other's mail slot.

Eunice came down with faith that God would supply her needs just as I had. And now my faith had to stretch a bit more. Now my monthly offering from the small youth group at the Auburn Missionary Church was shared with her, as well as any other money I received.

God knew our needs and He supplied them for the almost ten years we both worked in the mountains.

## SUNDAYS IN THE HILLS

### Lockards Creek

On Sundays our first Sunday School was Lockards Creek. The school house where we met had a pot bellied stove. Brice Hubbard always had the fire burning when we arrived. The road was graveled. Most of the folks walked. One large family came in a wagon and several came on horseback.



The Lloyd Mills family



The school house meeting place





Children at Lockards Creek VBS



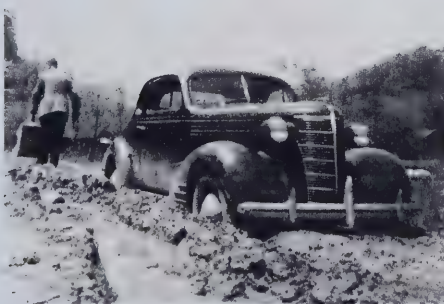
The Golden Jackson family



Part of our crowd

### Beech Creek

Next it was Beech Creek Sunday School. The last few miles were very rough traveling in the winter. It was partly traveling through the creek summer and winter. In the winter and spring, it was mud and more mud!

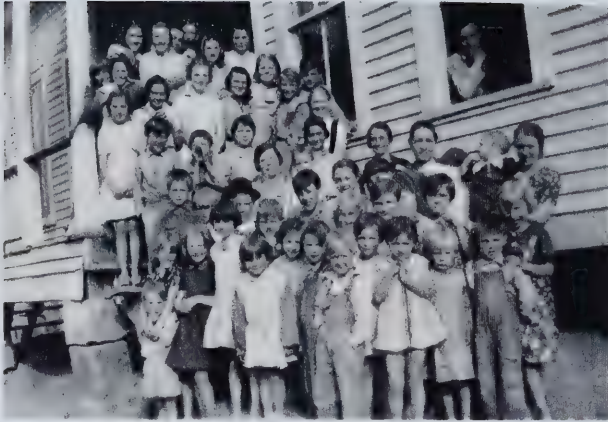


Lois' brother Ardon was visiting.  
He carried the folding organ for us.

If we got stuck too far from the school, we missed the folding organ. We were glad we could both carry a tune.



Our meeting place  
3-room school house



Sunday School is over at Beech Creek

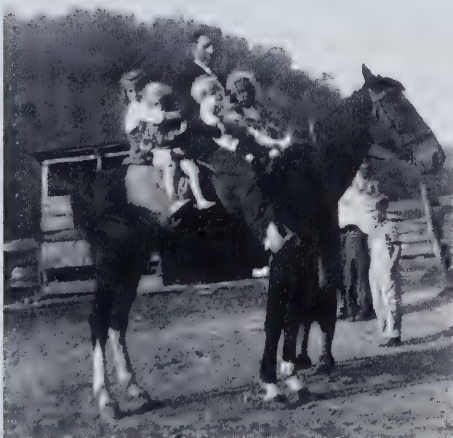


Going home

### Hector Creek

By now, we were getting hungry. We stopped at our home for a quick lunch en route to our last Sunday School, Hector. It started at two o'clock. Much of the Hector Creek road was right in the creek.

In time we were able to have Christian men serve as Superintendents in all of our Sunday Schools. Also local Christians taught the adult and beginner classes, and Miss Ann and I taught the Junior and Youth classes.



Carlo Hacker with 4 of their six children



Crossing the creek in front of the school





Traveling the creek road

### Frog Level

As time went on we learned of the need of the children at Frog Level, a boot-legging community near Manchester, the county seat. There were several Sunday Schools in town, but none of these children attended them. Since we had no time for another Sunday School on Sunday, the best we could do was meet on Saturday afternoons. We called it a Bible School. There was no schoolhouse, so we met in an empty house in the winter and under a big shade tree in the summer.

This was the only place we had to build our own fire. There were always men who did this in our three Sunday Schools that met in schoolhouses. In this house, there was a fireplace.



Children at Frog Level

## YEAR ROUND ACTIVITIES

### Winter

Winter months during the week we tried to visit the homes of each of our Sunday School scholars. That meant a lot of walking up and down the creek paths. We enjoyed visiting while sitting around their fireplaces.

### Spring

Springtime was Vacation Bible School time. One year I remember we had six schools. We always had four – one in each of our Sunday School communities.

Two years we had a school with the black children who lived near Manchester, our county seat.

We started each day with pledges to the Christian flag, the Bible, and the American flag. We usually had a picnic the last day and ended with a program on Sunday. The children always did well with their Bible memory work. We used flannel graph for telling the Bible stories.



My class one of those years

### Summer

Our special summer activity was Youth Camps that lasted for six weeks. It was located 21 miles south of Garrard near Barbourville. In 1942, workers from five different counties had met in our backyard to organize the camp. We called it Emmanuel Bible Camp, and it is still going on after all of these 60 some years. Some of today's workers are children of our original workers. It is still inter-denominational.

The camp was built on a wooded hillside. Our men worked hard to cut down trees. Some were taken to the sawmill. The lumber was used to build some of our buildings. Every spring the sprouts grew up all over the hillside. We all helped cut them down. And there were dozens of bunk beds to get ready for the arrival of the young folks, plus there were all the dishes, silverware, and pots and pans to wash, and food to order.

Some years, if we were short of workers, we had to fill in for several jobs. There



were the teachers, counselors and cooking jobs for the ladies. The men did the heavy work, directed the camp, preached every evening, directed the ballgames and managed the sound system. We enjoyed beautiful music echoing through those hills. We all took turns helping with the games and crafts.



Emmanuel Bible Camp



Cooks Mrs. Copeland,  
Miss Ann, Miss Lois



Eunice and her Dorm Girls



Lois and her class



Every night we had a service with singing and preaching. Many of the campers found Jesus as their Savior, and God called some into full-time ministry. Every morning was Bible Class time and Missions Hour with a real foreign missionary as speaker.

Nannie Jones, one of our Beech Creek Sunday School girls, heard God's call to missionary service and has retired after spending 37 years in Brazil. Another of our camp girls, who went on to Bible College, met and married a young man who became a professor in a Christian Seminary. He was one of the translators of the New International Version of the Bible. And some of the young fellows are preaching God's Word.

There was always a camper or two who got homesick, but even they weren't ready to go home by the end of the week. We workers were ready, however. We had to hurry home, wash our clothes for another camp week, and be ready by the next day to get to our Sunday Schools. Those were six busy weeks every summer.

### Fall

Before we knew it, the young folks were back in school. We would give them at least a week to get settled, and then our school work would begin.

Ann and I had a Bible Hour in 27 rural one-room schools. We took our flannel graph board with pictures for the Bible lessons and Ann's accordion to accompany our singing with the kids. We had to walk part way to some of the schools. In those schools we couldn't use the accordion but again, thank God, we each could carry a tune.

At noon we would find a shady spot to eat our sack lunches. There would be time for at least two more Bible classes in the afternoon.

At the first visit the Scripture memory plan was explained. If they memorized five selected Bible verses with their references, they would receive a Gospel of John, 25 for a New Testament, 20 more for a storybook, 75 more for a Bible, and 75 more for the coveted free week at Emmanuel Bible Camp. That totaled 200 Bible verses. The teachers gave his or her time at recess to listen to the children recite their verses. The next year, if they could repeat the 200 verses, they got another free week at camp. The third year they had to memorize the 5 chapters of I John. The fourth year they could go for free, if they learned the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, 7). After that, they could attend free as long as they were able to.

The teachers told us their attendance was always better on the days we were coming. However, because of the bad roads, our school work was finished by Thanksgiving time. That gave us a few days to shift gears.

Christmas was coming, and that meant a complete program for the children at each of our 3 Sunday Schools. We would practice with the children in the schoolhouses after



school was dismissed during the week. It was surprising how well they did the Sunday before Christmas. A number of kids' parents, who never came to Sunday School, would be there to hear their children do their parts.

After the Christmas programs were over, Miss Ann and I would be ready to take the bus for a two week vacation with our families back home. We would part in Cincinnati. She was heading for Washington, Illinois, and I for Fort Wayne, Indiana.

For our summer vacations we would drive the car. Ann would let me off at Pendleton, Indiana, and I would wait in the city park for the bus to arrive at the drug store. I was always glad when it arrived. Pendleton was the location of a large prison and I had heard of prisoners escaping.

One year our winter departure was more exciting than usual. Hector Sunday School always had the last program. Since we had to go the "creek road" the last half mile or so, we were always glad if the weather cooperated. We really needed the folding organ to accompany the Christmas Carols. This year there was a question. The creek water and ice were almost covering the big rocks and the snow was blowing. We decided to chance it anyway.

A good crowd had braved the cold. The children had done their parts well. The program was over, and the folks helped us pack up our organ and program props. We were on our way home, bouncing over the ice and snow covered rocks.

After we got out of the "creek road" we were able to make better time – that is, till we got to the top of the steep Hector Hill. As usual, we shifted to low gear. This time something was wrong. The motor was dead! What could be the problem? We got out to check the battery that was located under the foot board on the passenger side. It wasn't there! We realized we had dug it out on one of those rocks that was hidden in the icy water.

One of our concerns was how we could make our 4:30 bus? How thankful we were when we realized we were just a short walking distance from the only home on Hector Creek that had a telephone. We quickly called Cecil Corum, our Christian mechanic, and told him our plight. He said, "I'll be right there." It wasn't but 15 or 20 minutes till he was there. In no time he had our Chevy coupe hooked up to his truck.

While we were waiting for him, two of our Sunday School boys came carrying our cracked battery. Of course, it was leaking acid on their best clothes that they had worn for the Christmas program. We assured them that we'd buy them some new ones when we got back from our vacation – and we did.

We learned that a car will run on the ignition without a battery till the gear is shifted. Cecil dropped us off at our home and took our car to his garage. It was ready for us when we got back.

We hurried up the hill to our home, picked up our suitcases, ran down the hill to the main road, and made it just in time to see the bus coming around the curve. We were on our way! God's timing had been perfect – and exciting!!

Another year there was a question about whether we'd be able to make our much anticipated trip home for Christmas. There was a big ice storm. The buses weren't even running. However, we heard that Miss Wilson, who pastored the Green Brier Presbyterian Church, was planning to brave the trip in her car and would welcome some brave souls to ride with her. She was from Detroit, but we could ride as far as Cincinnati with her. Ann and I decided we'd be those brave souls.

We soon discovered we were an important part of her trip. The state road crews had placed barrels of sand at every icy hill. Ann and I would get out and carefully walk to those barrels. We'd scatter the sand on those highway inclines. After hours of those labored miles we made it to Cincinnati!

Miss Wilson took us to the bus station only to discover that even in the level country the buses weren't running. So she took us to the train station. Ann found a train to Peoria, Illinois, and I found one to Fort Wayne. We both made it home safely and were happy that since Miss Wilson was out of the hills she was able to navigate by herself. She arrived safely in Detroit. We all got home for Christmas!

After our 2 weeks vacation and our return to the hills, we were ready for the next phase of our work – our home visitation and, of course, our usual weekends with the Frog Level Bible School on Saturdays and three Sunday Schools on Sundays.

### *No Boredom in the Hills*

That is an overview of our work, but there were a lot of interesting sidelights I can think of. That first summer I was in the hills, we had an exciting experience with our car. Actually it was Ann's car that she purchased before I arrived. It was a black 1939 Chevy Coupe.

The four of us – Martha (Ann's sister), Ann, Flo (my partner for the first summer), and I were on our way home from our Hector Sunday School. Flo was sitting on my lap.



When we got to the Hector Hill, somehow the gear and brake malfunctioned and we started flying down the steep hill. Flo pulled on the emergency brake. The car hit a culvert, and suddenly turned over on its top. Fortunately, the windows were open and the four of us crawled out. No one was hurt, thank God, but there was a lady out in her yard across from the place we overturned who fainted when she saw us flying down the hill. That distracted us from our plight. We went to help her till she “came to.” By that time some men had come from we didn’t know where and had our car back on its wheels. We thanked them, crawled back in, and were on our way!

We wondered what would have happened if the emergency brake hadn’t been activated. There was a curve before we would have gotten to the bottom of the hill.

That happened during my first summer in the hills, and it was the only accident we had during the 15½ years I was there.



I remember a revival we had in the Beech Creek schoolhouse soon after I arrived. Rev. Henry Campbell, a Manchester preacher, was the evangelist. It was very dark that first night, and there were only a few lanterns in that old schoolhouse. It seemed very scary to me. But when Miss Ann started playing an old hymn on the folding organ and folks started singing, the place was transformed. I knew God was with us!

At the close of each service, we would sing “Just As I Am.” And each night Kenny Goins, a young man with Downs Syndrome who couldn’t talk plain, would cry. He, along with eleven others, accepted Jesus as their Savior.

The following week the community men dammed the water at one spot in the creek for a baptismal pool. Kenny was among those who were baptized the next Sunday. As he was being baptized, we were singing the last verse of “There is a Fountain Filled with Blood.” It went like this “— when this poor lisping, stammering tongue lies silent in the grave, then in a nobler, sweeter song, I’ll sing Thy power to save, I’ll sing Thy power to save.” How appropriate!

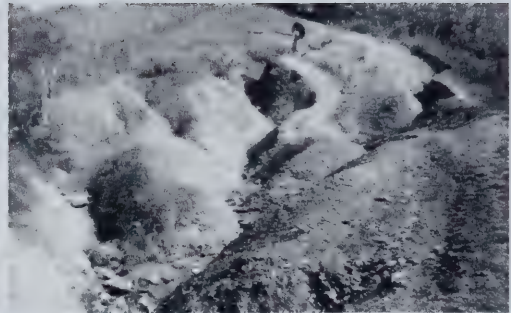


Another special memory I have happened on our way to the Lower Hector Creek school (Newberry) where we were having a Bible Hour in the one-room school. Before we got to the school, there was probably a ½ mile stretch of road




Baptism

that was pure mud. The wagon ruts were very deep, too deep for our 1939 Chevy. We tried to straddle them; however, we hadn't gone very far when our front wheels slipped right into those deep ruts! We couldn't go forward, and we couldn't go back. What were we to do? God knew our plight, and from nowhere Henry Spurlock showed up saying, "I'll help you." Henry couldn't read or write, but he was as strong as an ox. He took hold of the front bumper and lifted our car right out of those deep ruts! He was like God's angel to us that day.



Miss Ann climbing the Big Washout  
to the Newberry School

~~~~~  
Here's a note I wrote to the folks: *Did I tell you about our tie rod dropping just on the other side of the Hector Hill? It happened as we were coming home last Tuesday evening. The front wheels were just like this  when we got stopped.*

*It's just a good thing we weren't going down the hill or weren't going fast. Surely God was with us!*

*The folks living nearby were soon to leave for church and would be going past our place, so we rode with them. The next morning we got Cecil, our Christian mechanic, to go fix it. He wired it together with hay bale wire, and we drove slowly to his garage – probably 5 or 6 miles. He put a new piece on one end and by noon we were ready to go. The bill was 74 cents. That was probably the dealer's price for the new piece.*

~~~~~  
When the creek roads got impassible, we usually walked. However, one day we had to park the car an exceptionally long way from the Newberry school. Some folks insisted that we ride their donkey. We got situated on their old donkey – along with our flannel graph board with the pictures of our Bible story, our Bible, and music.

Upon leaving their drive we were ready to turn left toward the school, but that donkey refused to turn left. It had always turned right, going to the country store. Try as we would to make it turn left, it refused. We finally had to take it back to the barn. We walked to the school. That donkey had a mind of its own!

~~~~~  
Another memory I have happened on the way to another Lower school. It was way



down by the Redbird River. Since it had rained the night before, we questioned if we'd be able to ford the river. As we often did, we checked the depth of the water by throwing rocks in. We decided it best not to chance it without checking at a nearby home to see if other cars were crossing. There was a fence around the yard. Since Ann was driving, it was my job to go and check. I had no more than climbed the steps to the porch and knocked on the door when 4 or 5 large Dalmatian dogs bounded out from under the porch, surrounding me and yelping for all they were worth! Evidently there was no one home to rescue me. I was frightened to say the least! Without even thinking, I ran to the end of the porch. The fence was close enough that I jumped right over it and ran on to the car. Ann had been watching and had the car already to take off. You can be sure we skipped this school that week.



Here's another of our "school" memories. This time we were going to the Lower Beech Creek School, and again there had been a big rain the night before. We had to cross Island Creek to get to the school. And again, we had checked to see how deep the water was. We decided it wasn't passable and had started back to our car when a man came along and said, "If you ladies can wait a few minutes till I get back from the store, I'll help you across." We told him we'd be glad to wait. When he returned, we followed him down the creek to a narrower place. The local people had a small log placed across the creek. I braved the log first and surprisingly didn't fall in. Ann was afraid she couldn't balance herself so the man told her to put her hand on his shoulder. With his hip boots he could wade in the water beside the log. She made it, and the three of us were on our way!

The man was a friendly sort of fellow. Because of his guns – a pistol under his belt and a shotgun over his shoulder – we took him to be a big hunter. That is, till he asked if we would walk close to him. He said, "They are laying for me up in those hills."

It didn't take us long to guess that he was the notorious Walter Webb – a man who had killed at least nine people (including the father of several of our Frog Level children). We had heard a lot about him but had never met him. He had a farm on Lower Beech Creek, but he had been warned by the law to get out of the state and, if he cared for his life, to never come back. He fled to Hamilton, Ohio, where he found a job, leaving his wife and children to do the farming.

In our chatting along the way, he told us his three children were coming home from school at noon to help dig potatoes. After our Bible Hour at the school, three children started walking back with us. In talking with them, we learned their last name was Webb.

Then we knew our suspicion was valid. Their father had been so helpful and such a nice fellow to talk with. We couldn't imagine he could be such a character.

Quite often there would be an article in the Louisville Courier about a close call Walter Webb had had and quoting him as saying, "The Lord won't let them steal my life." But one night when he and one of his girls were working his bottomland with a tractor, they got him. There had been a sharp shooter laying for him up in the hills. They killed him on the spot, but didn't touch his little girl.

An article came out in the Time magazine entitled "End of a Feud." It told how the notorious Walter Webb had braved his way home just one time too many. It said he had died on the tractor with his head on his little girl's lap. Then it told how he would come home by bus, disguising himself by wearing his grandmother's long dress and sunbonnet. But no more – the feud was over.

Our mountain folks were very hospitable. They often invited us to go home with them to "take the night." When we were able to accept their invitation to spend the night, we were always awakened very early in the morning to the delicious aroma of an appetizing breakfast – fried chicken, the best biscuits and gravy, home made butter and jam, and fried apples. That gave us a good start for the day!

Eunice and I had a never-to-be-forgotten trip to Indiana for the double wedding of two of our brothers, Zenas (to Esther Lehman) and Dale (to Beth Cornell). One of the girls in Eunice and Elsie's Martins Creek Sunday School knew that we wanted to be there for that special June 12, 1952 event. Her name was Bonnie Wagers, daughter of W.O. and Margaret. W.O. was the Martins Creek school teacher and also the Sunday School Superintendent in that one-room school.

Bonnie told her father that she'd like to drive us to the wedding. He told her that, if we could tell her the way, he knew she could get us there. She had been driving since she was 10 years old. They lived way up on Martin's Creek and she had driven their pickup, a logging truck, and even a coal truck. We told him we could do our part, so he took Bonnie to get her driver's license and he signed it for her. It wasn't till a few years ago that we learned she lacked two months of being 16 years old. She had said she was 16, so she could get her license. She told us that her driver's license to this day is still one year off!

Her father got the truck gassed up (back then gas was only 11 cents a gallon), and



Eunice and I packed the few clothes we'd need for the several days we'd be gone. We were to leave early on Wednesday morning. But Tuesday night Bonnie showed up saying we would have to leave that night. The union was coming to the Clay County coal mines the next day, and it wouldn't be safe to travel. Someone might be killed, and there would probably be kegs of nails scattered on the highways.

We made a quick last minute getting ready and by 10 p.m. were on our way. Bonnie was dressed like a man – overalls, cap with sun visor and all. She had tucked her hair under the cap. We were on our way!

We stopped at Bonnie's brother's home in Hamilton, Ohio, for a little shut eye and were on the last lap of our journey the next day. We had time to help arrange the flowers for the wedding and witness the tying of the knots.

God granted us a safe trip back to Kentucky. Had we known our driver was only 15 we might have been more concerned than we were. However, she did a super job!

Bonnie graduated from Cumberland Baptist College in Williamsburg, Kentucky, married a young fellow from one of Ann and my schools, and they spent their married life in Alaska. She taught school and he, besides operating a business, owned an airplane that he used on Sundays to fly a missionary to his island churches. He taught Sunday School classes in those churches.

Bonnie and Ray had two boys and one girl. Their girl, Kaye, and a neighbor boy Joseph Kei Bowman were always close buddies. His parents came from Paducah, Kentucky. Their paths separated when Kaye left for her mother's college in Kentucky. She did well. Sadly though, Joseph got in with bad company in his senior year in an Alaskan college. He only lacked one-half credit when he quit school.

When Kaye got home for her summer vacation, her mother got a bright idea. Joseph should go back to Cumberland College with Kaye that fall. However, he didn't take to the idea till it was too late to register. Bonnie got up her nerve and called the president. She told him about Joseph, a bright young man who very much needed a new direction in his



Eunice, Bonnie and me in front of Bonnie's truck with Maurice in the rear



Bonnie & Ray Morgan's wedding picture

life. Would he accept him? The president said, "Send him on." He went, and it wasn't long till he found Jesus as his Savior. And it wasn't much longer till God called him to be a preacher.



Dr. Joseph Kie  
Bowman

Joseph went to a Baptist Seminary in Texas, and today he is pastor of the Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. This growing church has 11,000 members. It was in January when Bonnie told us about him. She had just received a phone call from him telling her how God was working in the church. He told her about the Christmas party he had for his staff and their families with 600 in attendance.

A few years ago Bonnie and Ray moved back to Kentucky. Ray was very sick. When he passed away, Bonnie called Joseph asking if it would be possible for him to come to Manchester and conduct his funeral. He came, and seven men accepted Jesus at the service.

When Bonnie told us all this, she said it was like ripples from Elsie and Eunice's and Ann's and my work in Kentucky.

We see Bonnie every year, either in Kentucky or in Florida – sometimes both places. Her daughter, Kaye, is Principal of an elementary school in Sebring, Florida, just 11 miles south of where we winter in Avon Park. A few years ago she was "Teacher of the Year" in this area and went on to the state. She is married to a Christian layman, and they have recently built a new home with an apartment for her mother.



Ray and Bonnie Morgan

One time when we were home on vacation and sharing at our home church about how God was blessing His Word, we told about how kind our people were to us. Sometimes they'd have us in their homes for a southern cooked meal. This one time the Caleb Hubbards had invited us for Sunday dinner.

Ethel had worked so hard to prepare a delicious meal. She even made a chocolate pie with a meringue topping. However to her dismay and to our surprise, while we were eating, a hen had an urge to lay her egg. She came in the back door by the dining room table. Her nest was behind the front door at the other end of the table. With so many folks sitting at the table there was only one way to get to her nest – fly over the table. Her feet skidded over the pie, leaving its marks on the meringue.



Ernie Greenfield heard that story and wrote the following poem about the hen's exciting experience.

### The Chicken and The Chocolate Pie

We missionaries, here in the southern hills  
Have our disappointments and also our thrills  
I'll tell you of an incident that happened one day  
In a dinner where we had been invited to stay.

We had pulled up our chairs and had taken our seats  
Offering thanks to God, we had started to eat,  
In a nest in a corner where an old hen laid  
Is where she was heading when she started her parade.

Right onto the table that old hen flew  
Before anybody even had a chance to say shoo.  
That hen showed no manners by any means  
As she samples the corn, potatoes and the beans.

At my end of the table, the chocolate pie sat  
That hen landed in it, feet first with a splat.  
The damage was done, and every eye  
Watched as I separated chicken from pie.

The lady of the house was embarrassed I know  
As over her face there crept a scarlet glow.  
It was quite a price for our hostess to pay  
She worked hard to make the meal a blessing that day.

Now in spite of the hen we ate pie crust and all  
And my piece had hardly been touched at all.  
Now the meal was a blessing, we had a lot of fun  
In spite of the thing that old hen had done.



Brice Hubbard was our faithful janitor at Lockards Creek Sunday School. He was the man who always had a warm fire in the pot bellied school stove when we got there. However, one snowy Sunday morning he was sure we wouldn't make it. There were four or five inches of fresh snow on the ground and the snowplow hadn't come through. No cars were running. To his surprise Miss Ann and Miss Lois showed up, walking the three or four miles. He hurried to get the fire going and sent someone to herald the news that the Sunday School teachers had arrived. We had Sunday School that morning.



Hubbard twins

After Brice and his wife Lettie had three boys and two girls, they were surprised when she gave birth to twins (a boy and a girl). However, they were not long for this world. Ann and I stayed with them all night. The little boy died in my arms, and the little girl in Ann's.

We hurried home to get new baby clothes that some missionary society had sent us. We dressed them and laid them together in a doublewide coffin that the local men had made. They were buried in a graveyard on the hill back of their home.



Sunshine Choir

At Lockards Creek we had ten girls who loved to sing. They were called the Sunshine Choir. We practiced with them, and they sang three-part harmony. Their mothers had made them white blouses and black skirts. They were invited to sing at a number of gatherings other than their home church.

Preacher Art Russell and his wife Esther worked under the Red Bird Mission. They were dear friends of ours. He was pastoring the Mill Creek church 18 miles from

our home in Garrard. Their home was always open to us, but sometimes they would give special invitations to a number of workers, some coming from the Red Bird Mission headquarters at Beverly. This one special evening the Beverly folks were there along with Elsie and Eunice and Ann and me. It was to be a "frog gigging" party. The guys did the gigging. We gals sat on fallen logs waiting for them to bring the frogs for us to watch. We were shocked when we saw how big bullfrogs could grow.



The guys tried to knock them out, but sometimes they would revive, and we had to keep them from getting away.

When the guys got enough for each of us to have a couple legs, we went to their home where we watched the legs jump around in the frying pan. That was a new experience for most of us. To our surprise, the white meat was very tasty.

Can you imagine the surprise we all had the next day when we learned that Preacher Russell had been misinformed. We had gotten one day ahead of the “frog gigging” season! We never did learn if the conservation man, who lived right there on Mill Creek, knew about our party. At least, to our relief, it never made news in the Manchester Enterprise.

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Another experience I’ll never forget happened after we got home for our two-week vacation. We had had our three Christmas programs as usual. Preacher Unruh took us to the bus station in London – the first leg of our journey home. After Ann got home in Washington, Illinois, she had a phone call from Elsie asking if she had had a good trip. It wasn’t till we had returned to Kentucky that we learned the real reason for the call.

There was a rumor going around that Ann and I had been arrested and that we were in the London jail, accused of sending maps to Hitler to help him in the war effort. We later learned that the rumor was started by some of the bootleggers in Frog Level where we had the Bible School on Saturday afternoons. We had never had contact with them, but we knew of their illegal activity and how some of them carried a Bible on the shelf behind the back seat as a camouflage for what they carried in their trunks.

When we returned from our vacation, we were aware of folks’ eyeing us. That next fall when we were back in the schools, several teachers mentioned the rumor. They said they couldn’t believe it, but if it were true that was where we belonged. The children had so much confidence in us:

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Miss Caroline Smith was almost a legend in Clay County. She was the first home missionary to come to the area. She rode everywhere on a white horse and lived in a log cabin up on Paces Creek. Garrard, where we lived, was at the mouth of Paces Creek.

Miss Caroline was known as a peacemaker. A number of men had been killed in the Garrard-White feud. She had friends on both sides and had the courage to go from one side to the other, trying to make peace.



Caroline Smith

That happened a few years before we came to Clay County, but the barn with all the bullet holes was still there.

Miss Smith and the four of us were invited to the Garrard Mansion for dinner one day. They gave us a tour. There were rooms in the basement where they would go for shelter. In the back yard we saw the buildings where the slaves lived. We knew a lady who was the daughter of General Garrard, born to one of his concubines.

Our little town was named for General Garrard. In the past it was known for a salt mine industry too. In fact, the former opening to the mine was right next to our home.

Miss Caroline came from Cincinnati. Her parents were wealthy business people. She had one sister. None of them were Christians, and when Caroline accepted Jesus as her Savior, they disowned her. That was when she came to Clay County to share her new-found faith.

We enjoyed visiting Miss Caroline. In the summer we could drive up Paces Creek, but not in the winter. Even the walking path by the road was beyond using then. They made a secondary path part way up the mountain to stay away from the mud. It was necessary to climb over a few fences and jump from rock to rock to cross the water branches coming down the mountain to merge with the main creek.

One winter afternoon, Ann and I decided to pay Miss Caroline a visit. We had to walk the upper path, of course. We were enjoying our visit with her and didn't realize that time had slipped up on us. It was getting dark, and we didn't have a flashlight. As we were leaving, she gave us a box of matches. A little light would be better than none – especially when we were crossing the branches and having to jump from one rock to another. We knew it was time to strike a match when we could hear the water running.

We had gone only about half way when a kind man saw the light of our matches. He quickly lit a lantern and brought it down the hill to us. We most gladly accepted, promising to return it the next day, which we did.

We couldn't help but thank God for this kind man. His lantern reminded us of Jesus who said, "I am the Light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." We were thankful anew that we knew Jesus, that Light, and that He was directing our lives in a dark world.



And now more about Nannie Jones. Nannie was one of our own Beech Creek Sunday School girls. She not only accepted Jesus as her Savior but also desired to follow



Him completely. She was one of 10 or 11 children who lived in a log cabin down the creek below the schoolhouse.

Nannie faithfully attended the Sunday School no matter the weather, rain or shine, mud or snow, cold or hot. When she had the opportunity to memorize those 200 Bible verses to earn a free week at Bible Camp, she jumped at the chance.



Nannie Jones

Nannie enjoyed that first year of camp so much that she reviewed the verses for her second free week. She gladly worked on I John and earned her third free week. Then she learned the Sermon on the Mount for her fourth year. Every summer from then on till she left the hills for Chicago found her at Bible Camp – for free.

It was through one of the foreign missionaries at camp that she heard and answered God's call to go to the foreign field as a missionary.

That meant she had to prepare. She enrolled at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago. That was quite a challenge for a girl who had never been out of the mountains. As she was boarding the bus for Chicago, some men were heard to say, "Give her three weeks; she'll be back." They didn't know Nannie and her determination to do God's will. She stayed at Moody for two years, working in the household department to help defray expenses. And then after two more years at a Bible College in Beckley, West Virginia, she graduated.

The field of Brazil opened to her under the Unevangelized Fields Mission. After spending a term there, the mission recognized that God had given her a gift in mathematics, and they knew their headquarters office in Belim, Brazil would need a good worker in another year. On her first furlough, they sent her to a business college in Detroit, Michigan. It was that year that she also took driver's training and bought a car. For the next 32 years, she faithfully served the Lord in Brazil.

After her parents' death, she made her headquarters with us in Sturgis, Michigan. When we retired, we moved her things with us to Auburn. When she retired, we packed her things in our motorhome and moved them to Kentucky.

She had bought a new mobilehome and parked it next to her sister Emma's home on Beech Creek. Emma has been a real help to her these years. Nannie lives within walking distance of her home church. Like Caleb of Bible times, her desire continues to be to "wholly" follow the Lord. She now works in her home church as treasurer and member of the choir.

### THE WORK GOES ON

God had plans for the future of His work at Beech Creek, Lockards Creek and Hector. His work must go on.

As God had led Miss Ann and Miss Esther to the hills back in 1937 through the American Inland Mission (located in Laurel County between London and Corbin on old 25), so He had plans for the future of His work in Clay County.

Miss Ann and Miss Esther each had had a burden to work where there were no Sunday Schools or churches. After reaching the London area, they discovered there were many churches and Sunday Schools. Surely there were more needy areas in southeastern Kentucky.

So one day the ladies decided to go on a scouting trip. They took Route 80 east of London. After they crossed the Big Hill with the sign “shift gears,” everything seemed to change. The London area was more like the Blue Grass. Now they were back in the hills. They continued on till they reached Manchester, the county seat of Clay County. Then they crossed a bridge and took a left, continuing several miles before they stopped at a log cabin.

They knocked at the door. A lady, Polly Patrick, came to greet them. They introduced themselves and asked if there was a Sunday School on the creek. She answered, “No, but the Lord knows we need one.” This assured the ladies that God was leading them. And then they learned that Polly was the one person in the community who could give them permission to use the schoolhouse. She granted them permission on the spot. They later learned that they were on Beech Creek.

Before they returned to Laurel County that evening, they had rented a little bungalow in Garrard. It didn’t take them long to move their belongings to their new home, and it didn’t take much longer to get the Sunday School started in the schoolhouse.



Beech Creek

Beech Creek U.M. Church

News of the new Sunday School got out, and folks flocked in. The Sunday School grew. Preacher Campbell, who pastored a church in Manchester, came out for a revival meeting. Many were saved, and the Sunday School continued to grow. Two years later Esther had moved with her new husband to Oklahoma, Ann had started another Sunday School at Lockards

Creek, I had arrived, and we started a third Sunday School on Hector Creek.

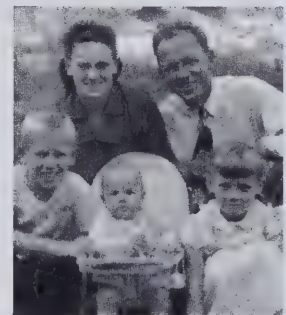
After several years, it seemed that it was time for Beech Creek to have a pastor. Abe and Velma Unruh came and helped out for five years. When they left for work in Washington, we were back with three Sunday Schools again.



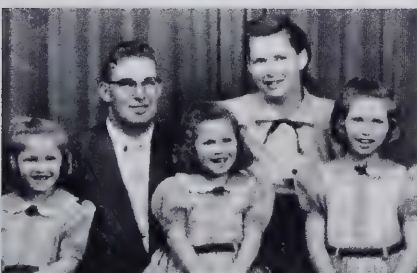
Unruhs

Then it was that God supplied a preacher who could have two preaching services a month. He was Pastor Russell, our friend from the Mill Creek Church. In time, he organized a church at Beech Creek under the Red Bird Mission. And after a few years, the Mission sent a full-time pastor and his wife, Don and Dorothy Penner.

Penners pastored the church for more than 28 years. They did such outstanding work in this rural mountain community that the Governor commissioned them (both Don and Dorothy) as Kentucky Colonels. Under Russell and Penner's ministry, a lovely church building and a parsonage were built.

Preacher Russell  
and family

Rev. Penner has built their retirement home on the Sallie Lyttle Branch at Beech Creek, so they continue to be an asset to the church.



Preacher Penner and family

The current pastor is Preacher Warden, graduate of Asbury College. His wife was a music major at Asbury. She presently teaches music in the Manchester High School and is a real help in the church at the piano and directing a professional sounding choir.

### Lockards Creek

At Lockards Creek, an old Southern Baptist Church revived several years after we started the Sunday School. They started meeting in the schoolhouse once a month right after we dismissed Sunday School. They asked us if we would stay to help with their singing. We were glad to help out.



Lockards Creek Baptist Church

In time they built a church building and invited us to have our Sunday School there. It was a big improvement over the one-room schoolhouse! Since then, they have greatly improved the church, even adding a baptistery, a Fellowship Hall, wall-to-wall carpeting, and lovely pews. A local man is serving as pastor of the church.

For more than 50 years our Beginners teacher at Lockards Creek, Anna Lee Jackson, and I have kept contact by mail. She has told me how her family is living and working for the Lord! She is a widow now and living with her daughter, Betty Carol, in Manchester. We spent a very enjoyable night with them enroute to Florida this winter.



Betty Carol, Lois, Anna Lee Jackson - December 2005

### Hector Creek

Since the school in which we met had only one room, I always took my class outside in the summertime. Sometimes the children sat on the creek bank and I stood on a rock in the creek to teach them.

Hector was our most isolated Sunday School. In time, many of our families had to move elsewhere to find work. Many went to Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan.

Our faithful helpers tried to keep the Sunday School going after we left, but in time they had to close it. By then, some of them had cars and could drive over the Hector Hill to the Lockards Creek Sunday School and church.



Part of my Junior Class at Hector Sunday School



Some of Our Visitors



Father mows our lawn



Mother mends a blanket



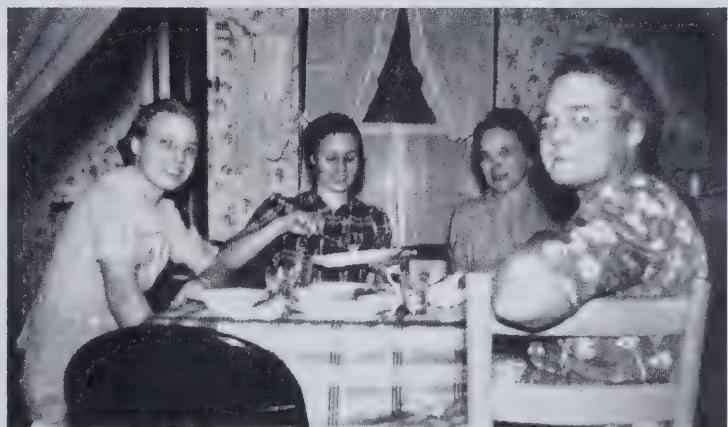
Father and Bev Deaton at Beech Creek



Ardon in our back yard



Eunice, Maurice and Zenas on a swinging bridge



Lois, Margaret Walters, Ann and Mother (in our kitchen)  
Cousin Carol Myrth took the picture.

*God's Word Continued to make a Difference*

In 1940, just before I left for Kentucky, the New York Times showed a picture of the town square of Manchester, Clay County's county seat. It was headed "America's most wicked little town." Just before we left for Florida in 2005, a national TV News report again highlighted Manchester. It showed the Clay County School Superintendent and his daughter telling how the girl had gotten into drugs. After she found Christ as her Savior and her life was completely changed, he changed the school's policy. Bible teachers could teach in the public schools and classes could open with prayer.

Many other changes have come to Clay County since I left in 1955. Manchester has many new businesses, including WalMart and a Christian book store. The roads to our Sunday School communities are still narrow and curvy, but they are blacktopped. No more getting stuck in the mud.



## Sturgis – Another Turn in the Road

My brother Dale and his wife Beth were called to pastor a closed church in Sturgis, Michigan. It was a challenging ministry and that first summer (1955) they needed help with their two Vacation Bible Schools. Eunice and I accepted their invitation to help during our vacation, and then they asked if we might feel that God was leading us to help them in the future.

Eunice and I felt God was showing us a plain path leading to Sturgis. In Kentucky Ann and Elsie were old enough to retire. Our Sunday Schools had grown into churches and were now meeting in their own church buildings. The public schools were closing to religious teaching.



Missionary Church in Sturgis, Michigan

On December 21, 1955, Dale arrived from Sturgis with a trailer to take Eunice and me with our belongings to Michigan.

Elsie's brother and Ann's nephew had already come, and they were on their way to Illinois and Wisconsin.

That had been quite a parting after all those years of working together in God's vineyard. But again, we knew He was leading!

Dale and Beth lived in the big apartment above the church sanctuary. Eunice and I made our home in the smaller apartment at the back of the church.

The church had been closed because of a split before Dale and Beth came. They had a more difficult job than it would have been to plant a new church. They had come in February of 1955. Eunice and I arrived on December 22 of that year. Of course, they were still struggling.

We soon discovered that they needed more than workers in the church. They needed money also. Beth was already working in a factory office, but she wasn't feeling well. Dale was working on the church building. The split had happened in the middle of a remodeling job. It wasn't too long after we arrived that they learned that Beth was pregnant. She had to quit her job, and Dale got a job in a nearby factory. Eunice and I found factory jobs as well. We were able to help the church with our offerings, and we paid \$40 a month rent for our apartment.

Eunice and I each taught a Sunday School class. She was a youth teacher and I taught the children. We helped with the music, did the janitor work, and tried to fit in wherever we were needed. When baby Kenton came, we were glad to be the “built-in” babysitters. A few years later we all welcomed baby Karen.

Note: The Sturgis Missionary Church now meets in a new building located on the main highway just north of town. They have an attendance of around 320. A Spanish church meets there on Sunday afternoons.

It didn't take us long to get involved in Child Evangelism Good News Clubs. We attended the teacher training classes each week and together taught a club in a home at Sweet Lake, east of town.

The Kirsch Company where I worked made window hardware. I worked in the traverse rod department – sometimes as an assembler, sometimes as a packer. Kirsch's were known to have their down times. One time I had been laid off for six months and my unemployment checks were about to run out. I was thinking seriously about looking for another job, when Beth came down to our apartment with a Gateway Shopper. She pointed to an ad and said, “Maybe this is what the Lord wants you to do.” The ad was looking for a buyer for a small Christian bookstore.

I had always loved browsing in the Gospel Temple Bookstore in Fort Wayne, but being a businesswoman was the farthest thing from my mind. However, I thought it would be interesting to see what she was selling. Dale and I went that very day to check it out. The inventory didn't look too exciting, but the Christian Booksellers manual and suppliers' catalogues were intriguing. I asked Mrs. Morrison if she would give me two weeks to find out what God wanted me to do. She was willing.

The two weeks were up and I still didn't know any leading from the Lord. It was almost 7 o'clock that morning when I left my sister off at her work. I reminded God that the two weeks were up and I still didn't know what He wanted me to do. He spoke to me in what seemed like an audible voice – maybe no one else would have heard it. He said, “Listen to the Nation's Family Prayer Period.”

This was a 15-minute radio program that we had always listened to back home on the farm. We found it reached to the Kentucky mountains too, but since I had been working second shift in Michigan, I hadn't tried to find it. I did remember that it came on at 7 a.m. and it was 70 on the dial.

I hurried home, ran into our apartment, turned on the radio, and sure enough I heard



the familiar voice of Rev. Warren Walker. The music was finished. Mrs. Cadle always sang “Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray?” Rev. Walker was saying, “There may be someone listening this morning who is seeking the Lord for guidance. It may be something big in your life – like a life partner, a college, maybe a business venture.” You can be sure I was listening intently! He went on to say, “If your will is completely yielded to God, start doing what you want to do. If it isn’t what is best for you, He will close the door. It’s like a shepherd when he takes his sheep to pasture. He doesn’t say to one sheep, ‘This is your clump of grass’ and to another, ‘This is yours,’ He gives them the run of the pasture and, if they go astray, he brings them back. So with our Good Shepherd, if you are completely seeking to do God’s will, start doing what you want to do. If it isn’t His best for you, He will close the door.”

Dale and I went that very day and filled his car with the merchandise, the CBA handbook and suppliers’ catalogues. When I paid Mrs. Morrison the \$250 she was asking, I had every confidence the store would be successful. It was God’s idea, not mine.

After the store was on its feet, I wrote to thank Rev. Walker for being God’s messenger to me. The business continued to grow for the 30 years that we owned it.

I named it “Gospel Book Store” after the only Christian Bookstore I was familiar with in Fort Wayne.

Beth, my sister-in-law, had inspired me to start the store and now Dale was the man power back of it. That first day he took me to a new store that was coming to Sturgis. They were lining their walls with peg board. I had never heard of peg board. Dale asked me if I thought it would be good to use for a foundation for some of my displays. I said, “Why not?” We went to the lumber company and bought sheets of it.

The new store was to be located in the dining area of our kitchen/dining room. Dale lined the walls with the pegboard. I bought low cabinets as a base for a divider between the kitchen and store. Dale put a high peg board structure behind the cabinets. Customers didn’t know it was hiding our kitchen. We had just room enough to open the refrigerator door.

Eunice was a big help in planning the displays. Between the four of us, it didn’t take long to get the store up and going. And it didn’t take long for customers to find us.



The new storekeeper

For six months I concentrated on the store and then Kirsch's called me back to work on the second shift. I had to go back because I needed money to continue building up the inventory in the store. So I was a saleslady during the day and a factory girl at night. At 4:00 in the afternoon, Beth took over the store. That gave her a part time job. I continued these hours for four years – 40 hours a week at the factory and at least that many working in the store.



Dale, Beth, Kenton and Karen

God knew that I, a poor home missionary, didn't have money to start a business. He also knew I had to have extra strength to do both jobs. He would have to give me that extra strength. And He did.

When Eunice and I were younger, we thought like most girls, we'd be married some day. But, after all those years of being in the hills, we thought all the good guys were taken. We thought it must be in God's will for us to remain single. We knew God's ways are always best, so we were contented. However, God had other plans.

Eunice met Earl Gay, a Christian bachelor who was just right for her. Six months after I started the store, they were married. When she moved out, I had more room for the store.

Dale got busy again and put pegboard on my living room walls, and the store more than doubled in size. With 10-foot ceilings, there was lots of room to display pictures on the walls. Sales continued to increase. Our slogan was: "If we don't have it, we'll get it."

That meant extra work, but also more sales – and more satisfied customers!

My customers used to tease me, wondering if maybe I was going to move my bedroom out to the garage to make room for more store. God knew my need for more room and He heard my prayer for full-time help. He had another miracle in the making!

One night about 3 weeks after Eunice and Earl were married, there was only half a line on my conveyor at Kirsch's. Usually there was a girl across from me. We'd chat off



Eunice and Earl



and on all night. This night I could think my own thoughts.

When I was thinking about Eunice and Earl being so right for each other, the thought crossed my mind, “Could it be there was someone as right for me?”

In a flash a verse I had read the night before came to my mind – just like God was speaking it directly to me. As was my custom, I had pulled a verse from my promise box before going to sleep. If the first one didn’t seem to fit my need, I’d pull another one, and another one, if need be. The first one was: “Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name, ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” I didn’t think I needed that, since I was happy in the way God had led me. I pulled another card and to my surprise it was the same verse. Evidently a mistake had been made in packing that box years before. I pulled another and it satisfied me.

Now the next night He was asking me to ask for a husband – something I had never done. I always thought He would send someone around, if that was best for me. I knew it was better to be single than to wish you were. But now this was like a command: “Ask and ye shall receive.” Seemed I would be sinning if I didn’t ask – so I did!

It was several years before Duane came into my life as a special friend. However, all this time I knew that sometime someone would be the answer to my prayer.

Duane and his mother had first come into our store during our Grand Opening. He was teaching a Primary Class in Sunday school, and he came back numbers of times to buy little novel prizes for his children.

The last Saturday afternoon in October 1965, I received a phone call from him. He wondered if I would like to go to the Kalamazoo Youth for Christ Rally with him that night. He helped to support them and would visit them occasionally. I told him I couldn’t, since I was babysitting my niece Karen. He suggested that maybe I could go the next month.

I was sure Duane was younger than I. I had always thought that, since my father was 5 years older than mother, ideally the husband should be older. I didn’t think it wise to get in any serious friendship if it would make any difference to Duane. So I wrote him a letter telling him my age. We learned he was ten years younger than I, but after our first date we both knew that God was leading us together.

I have enjoyed almost 40 happy years with that “someone” who God knew was “just right” for me. And He has kept me “young” for him. At 89, I’m still in good health.

God had saved Duane all those years for me and given him the desire to serve Him. His prayer for a Christian wife and full-time Christian work was answered at the same time

my prayer was answered – not only for a husband but also for help in the growing store.

Eight months from our first date we were man and wife, and there was a much needed man in the store! It happened August 3, 1966.

A week and a half before our wedding date, God led us to a building at 309 N Nottawa in Sturgis. It happened this way. Jean Mead, our next door neighbor was a Christian real estate agent. We had told her of our desire to move the store to a building on a main street. On that Saturday evening I got a call from her saying there was a building for sale on N. Nottawa – just a block from our present location, but on the main street going North and South through town. I told her Duane was on his way from his home in Mendon. When he arrived, I'd give her a call. I was sure he would be interested, and he was.

We toured the building that evening, and we both felt it was God's place for our store. We even had a place picked out for a children's play corner. They were willing to hold it till we got back from our wedding trip.

We both wanted to have a church wedding, but with Duane's job and my two jobs there was no time to plan one in my home church.

I had friends, Frank and Inez Dosch, who I thought had been married in the "Little Brown Church in the Vale" in Nashua, Iowa, years ago. That sounded like a romantic idea. An extended trip coming home by way of the Wisconsin Dells could be our honeymoon. If we could be married on Thursday, we could be home and go to work on Monday.

That is how it worked out. However, in order to be at the Nashua courthouse to pick up our marriage license before 5 p.m., we needed to leave Sturgis by 4 a.m.. That meant an early breakfast! Eunice and Earl made that possible. At 3:30 a.m., we were enjoying a special candlelight breakfast. We were on our way by 4 a.m..



LITTLE BROWN CHURCH IN THE VALE

The quaint old church was everything we imagined it to be! The preacher's wife and the custodian were our only witnesses. There were fresh cut flowers and wedding music over the sound system. During the ceremony we were surprised at the capers of a church mouse that had joined the party uninvited.

After the ceremony the preacher asked us to follow him to the belfry. He took hold of the rope and asked us to join him. As the bell started ringing, he let loose and said,



“From now on, you two will be pulling together.” And we have!

Note: We later learned that because of a big snowstorm Inez and Frank never made it to the Little Brown Church. They were married in the parsonage of a preacher friend in Illinois.

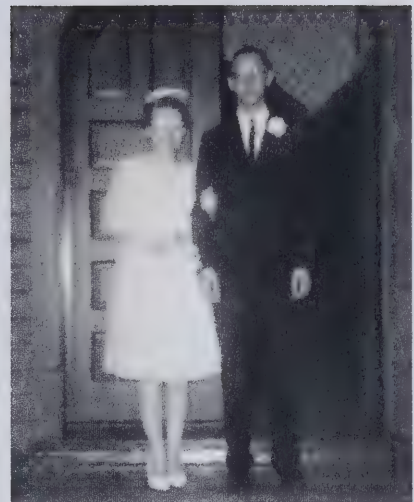
We came home by way of the Wisconsin Dells and stopped on Saturday night in a cabin in Kenosha, Wisconsin, on the shores of Lake Michigan. We went to church there on Sunday morning.

Something happened though that Saturday evening that gave us the assurance that God was with us and was concerned about everything that concerned us. Right after our wedding ceremony, we noticed that Duane’s ring was too big for him. What were we to do? He really wanted to wear it to work his first day back. That evening we went for a walk in the little town. When we passed a jewelry store, we noticed the owner was still working inside. He let us in, and we showed him Duane’s ring, asking if he might have a smaller one with the same diamond design. Upon checking, he found only one and it was exactly the size Duane needed. What a providential exchange!

Upon our return, we purchased the building on N. Nottawa. While Dale was converting the first floor into a store, we made Eunice and Earl’s second floor our home base. They lived across the street from the church. I would get off work at 1 a.m., hurry home, get a few hours sleep, and before daylight Duane and I would cross the street and eat breakfast in my little kitchen. Then Duane would be on his way to work in Three Rivers. I’d go back to sleep for a few hours in my old bed, setting the alarm so that I would be up to open the store at 9 a.m.

By Thanksgiving, Dale had things ready so we could move into our new store! Thanksgiving has always been a family day for the Gerigs in Sturgis. This year, 1966, it was also a moving day. Eunice and Earl had a delicious dinner ready, turkey and all, for the hungry family.

I can’t imagine how we had the store ready to open by Monday morning. Nor can I imagine how we both kept our 40-hour-a-week jobs and a few weeks later got our home moved and us settled in so that we could live fulltime in one place – 309 N. Nottawa. When we returned, Eunice and Earl had a lovely reception for us in their home.





Duane, his Mom,  
Mother, Father & me

We had a comfortable living room, a bedroom and bath upstairs, a kitchen and dinette with swinging doors into the store on that first floor. Then there was a family room with a small kitchen in the basement. We changed the name to Christian Supply Center.

Because Duane was praying for some kind of Christian ministry before we had started dating, he had purchased a brand new Nash Rambler with an overdrive for gas economy. I continued to work both of my jobs till it was paid for, which was

13 months. That also gave me 10 years of working hours, so that all these years I have been able to draw a small pension from Kirsch's.

Duane quit his Three Rivers job and got a driving job in Sturgis at a dry cleaners. Later, so he could spend more time in the store, he switched to a part time job at the Citizens State Bank. He kept his part-time job till we got the building paid for. From then on we were both full-time storekeepers.



There's a man in the store!

### Our God-sent Helpers

Since our CBA handbook said we couldn't expect to make a living with a Christian Bookstore in a city with a population of less than 25,000 (Sturgis was only 10,000), we knew we had to be very frugal. That wasn't as hard for us as it would have been for a lot of folks, since we both grew up in the country during the Depression. Also, I had spent those years as a faith home missionary. In addition, friends and relatives volunteered to help us in the store. Some we were able to pay a minimum wage. Besides my bother Dale, his wife Beth and my sister Eunice, there was our neighbor Hazel Johnston. Anytime we had an emergency, Hazel would come across the street to hold the fort till we got back.

Our nephew Kenton waited on customers when he was only eight years old. He was a smart little fellow, as well as very conscientious, and we trusted him.

Nannie Jones (our former Beech Creek Sunday School girl), who spent much of her



furlough time with us, was an important part of the store when she was with us.

Rev. Lawrence Runyon, our pastor, sometimes helped us in a pinch. (At this time Dale and Beth were pastoring in Allentown, Pennsylvania.)

The store was growing, and we really needed more help. Again, God had plans. Joyce Marks came to our store one day to find help in her brand new Christian walk. She had found Jesus as her Savior through a TV program. We sensed her sincerity and, when we learned of her need of a job and that she had previously been in business, she seemed to be a perfect fit for a job with us. She worked faithfully from 1981 to 1983 when a back problem forced her to discontinue.

Robin Van Haitsma, daughter of our pastor at that time, needed a job under co-op during her Junior and Senior years. She started helping us in 1983 and worked till she graduated in 1985.

Duane's sister-in-law, Reta, helped us out several times when we were at CBA conventions. She drove from Three Rivers. Her husband, Marlen, helped us several days too.

By that time our niece Karen came back to Sturgis with her husband who was starting Youth for Christ in our area. They were expecting their first little one. She became our part-time helper till Kevin came along on Christmas morning.

Karen also made a beautiful 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Memory Book for our store.

Christian salesmen were a vital help in keeping our inventory current. On New Years Days, my brother Ardon and sister-in-law Rosemary and their children Roger and Rhoda were our willing and efficient inventory helpers for many years.

We had an autographing party for a lovely Christian lady, Janette Oke, author of the best selling Pioneer Love Stories. We had never bought more than six books of a kind, but we soon discovered that we needed to buy a display of 48 of her books to keep up with the demand. What a privilege to have her visit our store!



Mr. Martin, Baker Book Salesman, and Lois

Christian Bookseller Conventions were another high point of our bookstore experience. Dale took me that first year to one in Chicago. After Duane entered the picture, we attended them in Cincinnati, Ohio; Anaheim, California; Denver, Colorado; St. Louis, Missouri, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. They got so big that CBA gave us a choice of

something smaller – Regional Conventions.

We attended many of them in Indianapolis and different years in St. Charles, Illinois, South Bend, Indiana, and Fort Wayne, Indiana.

These conventions gave us an opportunity to hear many top authors and musicians in person. We also received many free gifts from the booths we visited. Even in the smaller regional conventions, there were 50 or more booths to visit. There would be workshops to attend and concerts to enjoy at night. Not only was there fellowship with many who had the same business interests as we, but we enjoyed the Christian fellowship even more.

Our trip to the Anaheim Convention was extra special. We traveled as far as Sacramento by Amtrak. There we were met by my sister Ruthie and her husband John. We spent several special days visiting them and their kids and grandkids!

We had planned to take the bus on down to Anaheim, but John persuaded us not to. He said that, because of the heat, it would be much better to fly. He helped us get the plane tickets. Were we ever grateful to him! Two young ladies we met at the convention, who had driven down from Oregon, told us that they almost melted into their plastic seat covers coming through those mountains.

We had made reservations to fly home on a plane that was chartered by one of our suppliers, the David C. Cook Publishing Company. That got us to Chicago in a hurry.

A special highlight of the St. Louis Convention was meeting a Canadian missionary from Brazil who managed a Christian bookstore in Belim. What made her so special was that she and our Nannie Jones from Kentucky lived together in a house they were buying in Belim. We took her in our motorhome to visit the noted St. Louis Zoo.

In 1971, we doubled the size of the store. We hired a Mennonite contractor who hired Amish carpenters to do the building. One of the young Amish workers got married during this time. The whole crew had to take off 3 or 4 days to kill the animals and cut up the meat for the wedding feast.



Before



After



## Retirement – Another Big Bend in the Road

In June 1989 I was 72. It was time for us to retire, and God was preparing the perfect couple to manage the store for us. Dale and Beth, who had helped me start the store, were ready to leave the Missionary Church in Allentown, Pennsylvania, after pastoring it for 20 years.



Dale and Beth

All these years, Dale and Beth had kept in touch with the store. Beth, who had set up our books in the beginning, had audited them for us by mail all those 20 years.

With two grandsons in Sturgis (Baby Kyle had joined Kevin in 1987), it was time they were getting back! They were here to help welcome Kameron a few years later. And Beth was now in Sturgis to help keep the books at the Youth for Christ office. Grandpa and Grandma have been handy to help mentor the 3-K's, and who would make a better "sitter" for their dog and cat than Grandpa?

Memorial Day weekend 1989 was a busy weekend for us – and for Dale and Beth. We were packing up to move to Auburn. Dale and Beth were all packed and with their son-in-law's help were pulling out from Allentown with a big moving van headed for Sturgis.

Our house was to become Dale and Beth's home. And their rental house in Auburn was to become our home. (They had purchased our parent's retirement home from the estate at our father's death.)

Dale and Beth did a superb job. Our total sales had increased every year for the 27 years we had operated the store, but with their courage to do more advertising, sales increased even more during the three years they managed it.

Dale has never learned to say "No" if a need arises that he can assist with. When a small community church across the state line in Indiana needed a pastor for a few Sundays, they checked with the Missionary Church District Superintendent Rev. Waun. He checked to see if Dale might be available. He not only helped out for those few Sundays but after all these 15 years he and Beth are still pastoring the Jamestown Community Church.

This church and the store were too much for them and, when Dale learned he had cancer, they had to make a choice. With 36 years in the ministry, the church was the least strenuous for them. Thank God, with His help, the surgery was successful. We sold the store to a fine Christian couple, Gary and Judy Miller.

Duane's brother Marlen and his wife Reta planned a special retirement dinner party for us at a musical restaurant in Grand Rapids. His two sisters, Marguerite and Merry, were invited. The music that came from the walls, the posts – everywhere – was a never to be forgotten experience!



Retirement Dinner Party  
(Marguerite, Reta, Marlen, Merry, Lois)

We had officially retired, but it was necessary for us to spend several weeks helping Dale and Beth while they got settled in their new home and oriented to their new job. We lived in our motorhome that was parked beside the store.

Then it was time we got settled in our new home in Auburn.

We sold the business to the Millers on January 1, 1993. Dale and Beth moved to a lovely home of their own on Ivanhoe Avenue. He continued to take care of our building. And after they moved, he worked tirelessly in remodeling the upstairs into an efficiency apartment. We rented it to Heather, a Christian single girl, who was able to walk the 1½ blocks to her job at the Citizens State Bank.

It wasn't till October 2001 that our property was finally sold. We, as well as Dale, were greatly relieved.

Since we definitely knew that the store was God's idea and its success was the result of relatives and friends dedicated help, we wanted to keep our combined ministry going. With the money we received, we kept enough to update our car. The rest we invested in three gift annuities. Two were with Christian short wave radio stations, HCJB and Trans World Radio. They get the gospel out and disciple new Christians 24 hours a day all over the world. The third annuity was with Christian Communications who are getting the JESUS film shown around the world. Millions are finding Jesus as their Savior! As an extra bonus, we receive interest checks quarterly. With them, we can continue to give freely to the Lord's work. Duane and I each will enjoy that part of it as long as we live.



Our new home

1535 Dallas Street,  
Auburn, Indiana



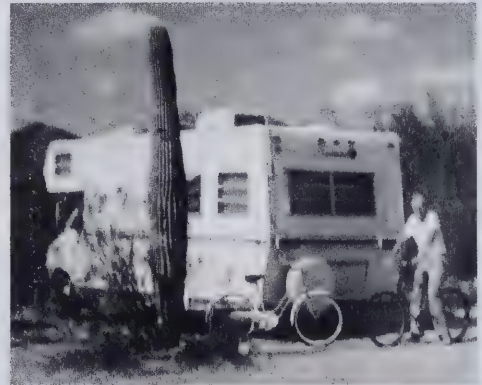


## Our Traveling Days

In November 1989 we left Indiana with our motorhome to become official snowbirds in Florida.

The motorhome has become another big part of our lives together. We bought a used Coachman several years before we retired. That gave us time to convert it into a more comfortable traveling home. We replaced the benches with captain's chairs. In the rear was a davenport that could be converted into a bed. We replaced it with a more comfortable permanent bed. It made it easy for us to stop and take a nap anytime we got tired.

We had a rack installed in front to hold our two bicycles. We got an air conditioner, a small microwave, and a small TV. We found some appropriate plaques in our store that added inspiration to our new home. We were packed and ready to travel!



Gilbert Ray Campground  
near Tucson, Arizona

God bless our traveling home  
And guide us every day we roam.  
Help us find the roads we seek  
And please don't let the plumbing leak.  
Save us Lord from engine trouble  
And mechanics who charge us double.

As we cross the U.S.A.  
Bless with sunshine everyday.  
Our Lord who watches over all  
Could you please let gas prices fall?  
Lead us toward good food and friends  
And when at last our journey ends  
Grant our rolling home sweet rest  
Until its next endurance test.

But first, we must say goodbye to our families. For Thanksgiving we ate out in Three Rivers a few days early with Duane's family. On Thanksgiving Day we had our traditional Gerig dinner at Dale and Beth's.

We were off! We spent our first weekend in Kentucky where I used to work. Then we headed for Lakeland, Florida. We spent ten days there in an RV park where my brother Paul and his wife Mary were wintering. He told us about a Christian campground in Avon Park. We checked it out. Their RV park was full, but they suggested another nearby Christian RV park. We spent our first winter there. The next winter, 1990-1991, there was

room for us at Avon Park. We are still spending our winters there. It's the next thing to heaven with Christian neighbors all around us. As we were leaving that spring (1991), we purchased a permanent trailer on the grounds. It is centrally located, which was a big asset to someone with a bad knee like mine.



Our trailer home  
Lot 22 – Avon Park, Florida



Our 25<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary was coming up August 3, 1991. Since we were older when we married, we knew we'd never make 50, so why not celebrate big on our 25<sup>th</sup>? We did, for seven months!

However, before we left we celebrated with our brothers and sisters and their spouses. (Ruthie and John in California were the only ones missing.) Since none of them were with us in the Little Brown Church when we were married, we invited them for dinner at the Golden Corral in Sturgis. We renewed our vows, assisted by my preacher brother Dale.



Things had shaped up so we could leave on our

Renewing our vows



extended western trip. We left on August 30, 1991 and returned in April 1992. Here are some of the things we did.

We spent the first long weekend with Duane's army buddy and his wife, Paul and Dorothy Virtue at Hinkley, Illinois. They persuaded us to stay over Labor Day, saying that without reservations we'd have trouble finding room in the campgrounds. We enjoyed our extended visit.



Dorothy and Paul Virtue

Next we revisited The Little Brown Church where we were married. We wrote a note to put on the bulletin board along with other notes. Ours ended with "After 25 years we're still pulling together."

Next it was the Corn Palace in Mitchell, South Dakota...

Bad Lands in South Dakota...

Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming...

Cousin Esther Ringenberg Rahn in Three Forks, Montana...

Lake Louise in Alberta, Canada...

Kicking Horse Campground in Yo Ho National Park, British Columbia, Canada...

Cathedral Mountain in British Columbia, Canada (picture on cover)...



Unruhs, Lois and Duane

Abe and Valma Unruh in Monroe, Washington, friends from Kentucky days... We went together to Vancouver Island. They insisted we stay for a week. Abe celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday while we were there.

Pacific Ocean Beach – Hwy 101...

Sister Ruthie, John and family in Citrus Heights, California... Niece Cheryl drove us to San Francisco and

Ruthie drove us all over the area.

Yosemite National Park...

Cousin Robert and Ruth Gerig in Merced, California... First time we met Ruth. She was an invalid and Robert patiently waited on her.

Dorothy (friend from FWBI) and Howard Injert, suburb of Los Angeles, California...

Sierra National Park, Edison Campground...

Roy Rogers and Dale Evans Museum in Victorville, California...

Sequoia National Park, California...



Duane, Ruthie and her grandson Keith

Gilbert Ray Campground near Tucson, Arizona...



Sunset between San Antonio and McAllen

Bibleville Campground in Alamo, Texas, near McAllen, for 5 months...

South Padre Island with Jack and Virginia Ashcraft...

Many trips to Reynosa, Mexico taking friends to dentist; Duane got a partial plate for \$250...

Train trip in Old Mexico from Metamoros to Reynosa...

Gladys Porter Zoo in Brownsville, Texas...

LB Johnson's Ranch near Austin, Texas...

Nephew Troy Hill in Austin, Texas...

Nephew Steve Gerig, Roxanne and kids in Houston, Texas...

Second Cousin Paul Amstutz and Jedonna in Jackson, Mississippi...

400 miles on beautiful Natchez Trace Parkway from Jackson, Mississippi to Franklin, Tennessee...

We arrived home April 1992, thanking God for His protection and guidance all along the way. We had several reasons to especially thank God. Here's one of them. We could have had a very serious accident going up to Yosemite National Park on Veterans Day. The highway is narrow with a lot of sharp curves. On the right side to protect us from a steep cliff was a rock wall about 2 feet high. Because it was a holiday, there were lots of long tour buses going up and down the mountain road. We were nearing what looked like an extra sharp curve when I said, "Duane, you'd better get over." With that wall he couldn't get over very far, but he slowed and got over as far as he could.



About that time one of those long tour buses came around that sharp curve and something went “smack.” We couldn’t stop because there were cars following us and neither could the bus for the same reason. Finally we got to a wider place in the road where we could pull over. We checked the driver’s side of our motorhome. Neither of us saw anything wrong, but there had to be something. Then we saw it. The little outside vent for our cook stove was mashed flat! We decided to not repair it till we got home, so our relatives and friends could see how God had answered their prayers – and ours!

We had only one flat tire on the whole trip, and it happened on a two-lane highway only a few miles from a garage where we could get it fixed.

The only time I was really frightened on this whole 7-month trip was in British Columbia, Canada. We had camped at the Kicking Horse Campground near Cathedral Mountain. That evening Duane was the first of the campers to see a beautiful big elk. It had come out into a vacant adjoining section of our campground. It looked like it was posing for us to take its picture. Duane alerted the other campers, and we all got its picture before it quietly sauntered away into the woods.

The next morning some young fellows told Duane that they had driven up the mountain road behind the campground and had seen some beautiful waterfalls. Duane wanted to see them too, so off we started. We didn’t dream how dangerous the road would be for a motorhome. It was very narrow with very sharp curves. I was on the steep cliff side when we came to a curve so sharp Duane couldn’t make it without backing up. I was the one who could see all the way down that steep mountain cliff. That’s when I was frightened! God helped Duane manipulate the motorhome around that curve, and we made it safely to the waterfalls! – and back!



Elk Posing

### More Traveling on the Journey

Our motorhome has been the source of much enjoyment for us all the years of our retirement. We have stayed in it in camp meetings at Prairie Camp near Elkhart, Indiana, and at Brown City Camp in the thumb of Michigan. Two years we traveled in it to Florida and spent the winters in it before we bought our trailer.

Then we took it out East visiting our niece Laurel and her family in Pennsylvania and Duane's cousin Ethel in New York. We then drove it up into Ontario, Canada. We visited Otto and Tina Dirks whom we had met in Florida. They lived only a few miles from the Canadian Niagara Falls. We went to the Falls on our 29<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Then it was to St. George visiting the Matthews whom we had met at Bibleville Campground, Alamo, Texas. Then up to Midland visiting George and Florence Axford, neighbors in Florida.

We stayed a week at a Missionary Church Camp Meeting at Stayner, Canada. The Senior Saints Choir from the Grabill Missionary Church was there for a concert. The director was our cousin Marsha Ringenberg Wright. What a surprise to see them way up there!

And there was the trip to the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary Gideon convention in Nashville, Tennessee. We stopped to visit Flo Vastine, a friend from FWBI at Rising Sun, Indiana, on the Ohio River on the way home. Flo was my co-worker my first summer in Kentucky.

We extended most of those Brown City Camp Meeting trips to visit friends and relatives in Michigan. There were always cousins Winfred and Lucille Amstutz in Holt, Michigan where we'd spend our first night en route to Brown City.

One year we went to Mackinac Island to visit our great niece Amber from California. She was working there for the summer. We were her guests so she could take us to the dining room for lunch. Otherwise just to get on the porch was \$5. We felt honored – especially to be with a great niece who, because of the distance to California, we hardly knew.

Then we spent a night at Cheboygan on the shore of Lake Huron. Jim and Susan Bryce, winter neighbors in Florida, arrived the next morning from their home in Pinconning. We all boarded a ferry to their lake cottage on Bois Blanc Island where we spent several most enjoyable days.

Several years later we made a trip to Pinconning with our motor home. It had a



problem our local mechanic couldn't remedy. Leave it to Jim Bryce. He knew how to fix it!

Another year we made a trip across the Mackinac Bridge and visited Art and Myrtle Adams, in Pickford, Michigan. They took us to the Locks and then stopped in at the Bill and Verva McDonald's Auction Barn. They were all friends from our campground in Florida.

Another year on our way home from Brown City we visited another Florida neighbor, Emma Avery, who lived on beautiful Torch Lake, just off of Lake Michigan. We followed the Lake around and stopped to see other Florida snowbird neighbors, the Duttons at Rapid River and Ruth Hoffenberger at Iron River. Next we went up to Copper Harbor, the northern-most point in the United States.

We then came down through Wisconsin and spent a day with Duane's old Army buddy and his wife, Paul and Dorothy Virtue in Hinkley, Illinois. Our next stop was Ottawa, Illinois, to visit a Christian Bookstore that was owned by Lisa, one of our Sturgis Sunday School girls, and then home.

Our last big trip happened in October 2003. We flew to Sacramento, California, and spent 13 memorable days with my youngest sister and her husband, Ruthie and John Imler, and my cousin and his wife, Robert and Maxine Gerig, in Turlock.



We have spent every winter since we retired in the South -- 15 of them in Florida. We have made our trips going down and coming home like vacation trips. After a big family Thanksgiving dinner with Dale and Beth in Sturgis, we head south. We spend that weekend in Kentucky, visiting the Beech Creek church one year, and Lockards Creek the next. Going home we visit Duane's niece and her husband, Karla and Jimmie Clark, in North Carolina, going to church with them on Sunday a.m. Then we stop at my cousins Paul and Jedonna Amstutz in West Virginia, and then stop to see our cousins John and Carol Myrth Brenneman in Lima, Ohio. A few hours later we're home!

## **The Gideon Ministry and More**

The Gideon ministry has been a big part of our lives since soon after we were married. The Gideon International is a Bible distributing ministry organization of business and professional men.

Duane qualified to become a member when he married into the Christian Bookstore business, and I qualified to become a member of the Gideon Auxiliary when Duane became a Gideon. We have been active all these 30 some years and are each lifetime members.

Duane's favorite job has been Scripture Secretary – being responsible for the distribution of Bibles in hotels and motels and checking them annually to make sure they are in good condition. The Scripture Secretary also was responsible for New Testament distributions in public schools for years and they still distribute large print ones in nursing homes and hospital rooms. He has also been responsible for distributions to police and fire departments.

Weekly on Saturday mornings Duane attends the Gideon prayer breakfast, and we attend the monthly dinner meetings together.

Duane belongs to a Gideon jail team that visits the local county jail on Sunday evenings. The inmates who want to talk to the Gideons come down to the visitation room, one cell block at a time. Sometimes as many as 35 come down. Usually he doesn't get home till 10:30 or later!

Here is one of many inspirational poems written by Robb Moore, one of the inmates at the DeKalb County jail whom Duane helped to make a "turn around."

### **The Dream**

I had a dream one night in bed  
That I had passed away.  
I heard a voice call out to me  
"Arise, 'tis Judgment Day!"

I found myself at heaven's gate  
But no one was in sight –  
The voice again directed me,  
"Come walk into the light."



The gate then opened up for me,  
The way for me was shown.  
And all at once I found myself  
Before the Master's Throne.

He then inquired of me and said,  
"Why should I let you stay?"  
I said, "You sent your Son to die  
And wash my sins away.

I know that I could not get in  
On merits of my own.  
So I asked your Son to come inside  
And make my heart His home."

"Well done, my good and faithful child,"  
The Sovereign Lord then said.  
And Jesus came and placed  
A golden crown upon my head. (II Timothy 4:8)

I then awoke and had to sigh,  
But I could not be blue.  
Because, you see, I know that  
Someday my dream will come true!  
— Robb Moore

I have been a back-up helper for the Gideon Auxiliary Jail Team. We work with the women inmates who come down to the visitation room every Sunday night. We often ask them if they have any prayer requests. We were really shocked when a beautiful blond young lady started crying when she asked us to pray for her. She said that she is being sent to prison and will be there the rest of her life,

Since we've retired, Duane has been active with the Gideons for 16 winters in Florida and one winter in McAllen, Texas.

With our motorhome we have been able to enjoy a number of International and State Conventions. As I mentioned before, we attended the 100<sup>th</sup> Gideon Convention, which was

held in Nashville, Tennessee in 1999. We were encouraged to take a Gideon from overseas out to eat. We chose Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Treco and their grandson from Nassau in the Bahamas. When they learned we spent our winters in Florida, they invited us to visit them. The following February we flew over and spent four days with them in their island home.

They gave us an interesting tour of the island and also of the new resort Hotel Atlantis on Paradise Island. It was within sight of our bedroom window. This 1250 room hotel cost \$900 million to build. It's for the richest with some of the suites costing \$17,000 a day to rent! Our host helped to place Gideon Bibles in each of those 1250 rooms.

A highlight was attending the Grace Community Church with them. Her brother, Dr. Rex Major, was the pastor. He had received an honorary doctor's degree from the Caribbean Graduate School of Theology and had taught in the school. My brother Zenas had started the graduate school and was still its president. The Treco's had gone to Jamaica when he got his degree so they too had met my brother. What a coincidence! Two other young fellows doing internship in their church had also graduated from the same school.

Since Duane and I had spent ten memorable days in Jamaica in 1971, this contact in the Bahamas was even more meaningful to us.

When we retired and moved to Auburn, we were able to work with a number of my old friends who also had been led to serve God through the Gideon ministry. Cloyd Anderson, an old friend from the Hopewell Church, was president at that time. He had married Mildred McNamara, my old friend and neighbor. Then there were the Carnahan brothers, Ralph and Raymond, also from Hopewell. And Norm Gerig, a distant cousin, and Kern and Ann Butler. Kern's mother was my Home Economics teacher and Ann was a friend from the Missionary Church.

It has been very special for me to return to my old home stomping grounds and renew old friendships. Duane likes making new friends and has been happy too with our move.

We left part of our hearts in Sturgis and still visit there every chance we get. I feel the same way about Kentucky. Duane loves it there too and my friends love him.

Two winters on our way to Florida we spent a week in Mobile, Alabama, helping assemble Russian and Chinese Bibles to ship overseas.

We have found more opportunities to help get God's Word out in our new home area. Child Evangelism was a natural for both of us as well as for the house we moved into. My parents had had a Good News Club for the neighborhood kids in their home for years.



Now it was our turn to host a Club. Mabel Rose was our teacher. However, when we started spending our winters in the South, we had to settle for a 5-day Club in the summer. We have had this Club for 15 years.

For four years we have enjoyed our time with the residents at the Beverly Rehab Health Care in Fort Wayne. Also we distribute 150 copies of *Our Daily Bread* devotionals in large print each quarter to the four nursing homes in DeKalb County. We took this job over from my brother Ardon when he left us for heaven, and we both enjoy giving them personally to the residents.

Guess there is something we all can do on our Journey with Jesus that will help others to “look up” in their journey. It may be as easy as a SMILE. God help us to be faithful!

## Ups and Downs on Our Journey

I thank God for the good health I have enjoyed, but everyone who has lived 89 years in this world has had some problems. All the surgeries I have had have been on my right leg. I had torn the cartilage in my right knee years ago when I was playing with my Lockards Creek VBS children at recess. That was in the morning school. I taught my class at Hector that afternoon and never did see a doctor. We were able to finish out the rest of the week at both schools.

The initial “hurt” got better, but it never was the same. It gradually caused me more trouble and finally, while I was in Sturgis, I had to have the torn cartilage removed in the Kalamazoo Hospital.

It was years later when I was 80 and Duane and I had returned from one of our many motorhome trips to camp meeting that my knee acted up again. As usual I had helped unload our things. I hadn’t done more than my share, but going up and down the steps so many times was too much for my knee.

I decided to rest it to see if it would improve, but it didn’t. However, while I was resting it, I got a bright idea!

A number of years earlier, while we were still in the store, we had ordered an autoharp. I had been too busy then to learn to play it. This was my chance! Duane got it down from the top shelf of our closet where we had stored it. I spent hours working with it. I could hear the changes in the chords. Poor Duane! He patiently listened to my practicing till I had worked out the chords for more than 100 songs and choruses.

Duane and I had never sung duets. We both have low voices and the music is all written too high for us. We didn’t have time to work with anyone to transpose them. Now was our chance. Since I was playing by ear, I could adjust it to our voices. We could sing duets!

It was at that time that my brother Maurice was a resident at the Beverly Rehab Health Care in Fort Wayne, suffering from Parkinson disease. We visited him regularly on Tuesdays when our cousin Loyal Ringenberg had a Bible Study there. When Loyal learned we were singing with the autoharp, he asked if we would sing a few songs before his Bible Studies. We were glad to.

However, the next spring when we got home from Florida, Loyal at age 97 had just had his last Bible Study at Beverly and the two other nursing homes he taught in every



Tuesday. He was a patient at the St. Joseph Hospital in Fort Wayne on his way to heaven. He entered heaven a few weeks later (May 2001), never leaving the hospital. He asked if we could take over his nursing home ministry. We said we could take over Beverly. That was four years ago. We have enjoyed this ministry together. We greet each one, then it is "sing along" time with the old hymns, and we have a short devotional, Bible reading and prayer. Our closing song is always "Blest Be the Tie that Binds." During the winter while we're in Florida, Rev. Gerald Ringenberg has filled in for us.

"All things work together for good to those who love God." My knee injury was one of those "all things." I learned to play our autoharp!

On December 1, 1997, I had my right knee replaced and on January 19, 2004 I tripped in the dark when Duane and I were out walking. I shattered my right hip in four places. Both surgeries were in Florida. Each time I spent five days in the local hospital and twelve additional days at the Rehab Hospital in Sarasota. Each time Duane was with me much of the time. Our friends, the Gates, took us in for five days after being released from the rehab hospital and a friend, LaVeta Weaver, did the same for us after my hip surgery rehab. Bless them!



Duane and Lois with Autoharp

We had some bigger bumps in our journey together when Duane had several serious surgeries. Because of diverticulitis, he had one foot of his colon removed in the Kalamazoo Borgess Hospital in 1987.

After we retired he had open-heart surgery in Parkview Hospital in Fort Wayne. My niece Dawn and her husband Brian opened their home to me so I had to walk only two blocks to stay with him during the day.

We were at home in Auburn in November 2004 when a hemorrhage alerted Duane to the fact that he had another serious problem. He saw a urologist at once. He discovered that Duane had a fast growing cancer in his bladder and another kind of cancer in his prostate. He suggested six chemo treatments. That sounded like a "band aid" to us. We were encouraged when we learned that our friend, Dean Jewell (a Gideon and also lay leader at the Alliance Church) had had the same problem seven years earlier and had successfully had

a new type of surgery. It is called Orthotropic neo bladder surgery, and he was the 18<sup>th</sup> person in the United States to have it. The procedure was done at the University Hospital in Indianapolis. They made a new bladder out of his intestine. Duane decided to go with this surgery.

Dean took us to Indianapolis three times. The third time his wife Carol went along. They stayed with me till Duane's surgery was over, and he was in his room. The surgery was successful! They checked the lymph nodes around where the bladder and prostate had been, and they were all OK!! We thank God!!

For five or six days he couldn't eat a bite or drink a drop of water while the new bladder was healing. He lost 20 pounds. It took us the rest of the winter, with the help of a visit or two a week to Ponderosa, to put the weight back on. We were fortunate that Indiana had an exceptionally mild winter in 2005, because we were not able to go to Florida.



## God's Miracles on the Journey

We know from reading our Bible that God is interested in our bodies as well as our souls (James 5:13-18). It isn't always His best will to heal us here. It may please Him to give us a perfect healing in Heaven. That's what His will was for my sister Eunice in 1978 when she died of cancer. However, if He isn't through with us here, we can know He is able to do something special for us that will bring glory to His name. Sometimes He works through doctors, sometimes apart from them. He has proven to me more than once that He can work apart from them.

One time when we were on our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary trip out West, God healed me from shingles. Duane and I were practicing with the choir at Bibleville Campground. A spot on my back kept hurting. I couldn't find a comfortable position to sit in. When we got back to our motorhome, Duane looked at it. The spot was red and kind of bubbly. It itched and burned. I had had the shingles once before, so I recognized the symptoms. We knew it was important to start treatment right away. However, it was Friday and too late to go to a doctor in McAllen. More than that, it was raining and very windy. We never felt safe driving our motorhome in a strong wind. To get to the ER was out of the question.

When we went to bed that night, we told the Lord we felt trapped and were dependent on His help. He was faithful! When we got up the next morning, the hurt was gone and even the red and the bubbles had disappeared!!

A few years ago while we were in Florida on March 6, just a few weeks before Easter, I had an experience we will never forget. We were just leaving the Alzheimer Unit of the Oaks Nursing Home next door to our campground where we had a 30-minute weekly service. My right knee started hurting with every step I took. When we got to our trailer, Duane took my temperature. It was 102 degrees, and my knee was warm and swollen, a dangerous condition for a replaced knee. It was Sunday and, of course, our family doctor wouldn't be in. Again, we felt we were thrown upon God for help.

We prayed and I called my three brothers, asking them to pray. Then we went to bed, but I couldn't sleep. Around 1:30 a.m. it dawned on me what was wrong. Three years earlier I had had my right knee replaced. I remembered my orthopedic surgeon had given me a letter of instructions that said if I had any procedure that caused bleeding, even dental work, I should take an antibiotic two hours before. And then I remembered that when I had had a colonoscopy on Tuesday, they had done a biopsy. That would have caused bleeding,

and I hadn't had an antibiotic.

I found the letter, and it said that without an antibiotic the bacteria would go to my new joint and then into my bloodstream. That frightened me. I decided to call the hospital ER. They told me to call "Ask the Nurse." I did, but she had no information for my problem. She said I should call my doctor. At 2:00 in the morning? – I didn't have the nerve. I went back to bed and told the Lord it looked like we were dependent on Him till we could see our doctor in the morning. I remember putting my hand on my knee and asking God, "Would you please keep the bacteria from getting into my bloodstream till we can see our doctor?"

But God had a better idea! When I got up in the morning, the heat and hurt had left my knee and the swelling had gone down! Duane took my temperature, and it was normal!! God had worked a miracle!!!

The next morning we went to our doctor's office very early. We wanted to be sure everything was OK. She sent me to my orthopedic surgeon who had done my knee. He, Dr. Soni, was a Hindu doctor. He checked the fluid in my knee. Since the swelling had gone down, the fluid had too, but the little he found was enough to send to the lab. The report came back "No bacteria."

My doctor also sent me to the hospital lab. They took four vials of blood, and they were all OK.

God had truly worked a miracle. Both of these Hindu doctors readily admitted it. I told my surgeon that Duane and I had prayed to our God and we'd called our brothers asking them to join us. His response was, "You must be on the right team!"

Our Hindu family doctor opened her little billfold and pointed to a \$50 money tract that we had given her previously. She, too, realized that our God had worked a miracle!

Since this was just a few weeks before Easter, we prayed God would continue to speak to them through Easter programs on TV, the newspaper, outdoor church bulletin boards, and anywhere they would see HE IS RISEN! We pray they will learn to know Jesus who is alive!

We continue to thank God that I'm not in a hospital dying of bacterial meningitis. From the doctors and nurses I have learned how serious my problem was. They say the bacteria should have gone not only from my knee to my bloodstream, but then to my joints and then to my brain. It would then have resulted in bacterial meningitis, which is usually fatal. If not, I would have had to spend the rest of my days in a mental hospital.



When we got home in April, I told my family doctor, Dr Kidder, about my experience. He added to the above, "And if you would have lived, you would have had to have your knee replaced."

I thank God that Jesus is alive and that, because of His love and power, I'm alive too – and healthy!

## Opening the Letter Box – A Peek into the Past

June 12, 2006. At the beginning of my story I wrote that I was too busy to keep a diary. I did, however, write home every week and Mother kept my letters. They've been stored in a box – hundreds of them. I planned to read them when I was old and confined to a rocking chair. Today I am 89. That sounds a lot older than I feel and I'm surely not confined to a rocking chair, but I decided I'm old enough to take a peek into that box.

Here is what the very first letter I pulled out said:

*Mon. 7:15 A.M.*

*Dearest folks,*

*Just a few lines to tell you we had a good trip back to Garrard – not more than usual traffic, except between Lexington and Richmond. The weather has been ideal and our welcome was warm.*

*We haven't been to Hector yet, but we'll be leaving soon. Our DVBS starts at 9:00 and there is a lot of planning and arranging to do the first day.*

*We got as far as the Island Creek Baptist Church yesterday by 10:45 A.M. That's just outside of Manchester. We stopped to attend the service, which started at 11:00.*

*Lloyd Centers is their new pastor. He was saved through our school work and married one of our Beech Creek Sunday School girls. He has just graduated from the Clear Creek Baptist Preachers School.*

*He was so surprised and tickled to see us, he cried. He told the folks we meant more to him than any other two people in the world. At the close of the service he had us go to the front for a "hand-shaking." We shook hands with more than 100 people. He invited us to their home for supper tonight.*

*Is he ever a good preacher! In a recent week of revival meetings he had, 42 people were saved.*

*You may remember we have written about a young fellow who was just about killed in a mining accident before he told God he would preach. This was that young man.*

*Thanks for the nice vacation we had with you. More later.*

*Love, Lois*

Can you imagine the fun I'm going to have when I get back in that box?



August 11, 2006. I've been digging deeper, and I have been having more fun. Some of the exciting things recorded in those letters I had completely forgotten.

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Excerpts from the next three letters are related to that first one I pulled out – about Lloyd and Freida Centers.

*October 2, 1954*

*Do you remember me writing about the couple on Paces' Creek where we had supper the other night, Lloyd and Freida Centers? He had been a boy in the Paces Creek School where we taught the Bible and Freida was one of our Beech Creek S.S. girls. They are a fine Christian couple with four children. Well, we just heard that his legs were crushed in the mine where he was working yesterday. One may have to be amputated. Please pray for them. It's hard to understand but the Lord surely has a purpose for allowing it to happen.*

*Schools are coming fine. Our work seems to be appreciated more than ever.*

*October 21, 1954*

*It's about time for Zenas, Esther and baby Steve to get to bed for their last night in Indiana on their way to Jamaica. We hope they get an early start so they won't have to travel too fast or get here too late. We are getting anxious to see them.*

*Freida Centers stopped in this evening wondering if we could take her to Lexington hospital tomorrow to see Lloyd. We could hardly refuse her, but we shouldn't have to stay too long. She has learned how to slip in the back way and can get in before visiting hours. Lloyd's legs are both set now and today they did some skin grafting. He's doing remarkably well!*

*We've had some frosts, but so far they haven't killed our flowers. We've covered several of the more tender ones.*

*Have I ever told you about Matt Hensley? He's the school teacher who has taught for 25 years straight at our isolated Newberry school. He has taught school for 52 years and has just retired at 73 years of age. He's been one of the best teachers in Clay County. He has graduated more from the 8<sup>th</sup> grade than any school in the county, even though it is so isolated.*

*The Hensleys have a great big farm and a big house. His wife is the most liberal-hearted person I have ever met. They have a big deep freeze and many times she gives us a*

*dressed chicken, bacon or beef roast from it. During the summer and fall we always visit her garden with her and come away loaded. Yesterday we had dinner with them. She insists we eat with them again in two weeks when we visit the school again.*

*They are raising their 9 year old granddaughter. They were so pleased to tell us of her accepting Christ as her Savior during the recent revival held at the one room Newberry school house.*

*Last night at the special invitation of the two teachers at Lower Laurel school we attended a revival at the Lower Laurel Baptist church. It was the last night of the revival. We were surprised when the young evangelist, Earl Clark, got up to preach and told about never going to S.S. or church as he was growing up. His parents still aren't Christians. However, he never forgot the Bible stories he heard at school. He went on to say, 'They might not remember me, but I'm glad my Bible teachers are here tonight.' He gave a wonderful message. There was such a good spirit in the meeting. Seven had been saved, including one of our former school teachers.*

*At the close of the service, we talked with him and learned that he went to the Silver Mine school. There were never more than a dozen students in this isolated school and we had to walk part way to get there, but it was a needy community and we're doubly glad now that we went. We later learned that Earl had gone to college and taught school until God called him to preach. He spent 3 years at the Clear Creek Mountain Preachers school and a year or so at a Baptist Seminary.*

*We had another unusual experience yesterday. We stopped to leave a milk jar at a home on Hector Creek as we came home yesterday evening. The older children came to Sunday School. Their mother would have too if she had a way, but they had so many little children and she wasn't too well. Anyway, Henry Asher, her husband, was saved at the Newberry school house revival, and his life is really changed. She thinks now he may help her go to S.S. with their little ones.*

*I want to seal this after Zenas' get here tomorrow so you'll know they made it safely.*

*January 29, 1955*

*This is a cold, snowy night. We had 12 degrees last night and it's supposed to be 5 degrees tonight. The weatherman talks like you are having a cold snap in Indiana too.*

*This afternoon we had a real surprise. You remember me writing about Lloyd Centers, one of our Paces Creek school boys who married Freida, a girl from our Beech*



Creek S.S., who was hurt so critically in a mine a few months ago. Freida came to our front door to see if we were home. She said Lloyd and the children were in the car and had come to visit us. She went out and helped him. Our steps were steep and icy, but he made it with his crutches. He still has a full length leg-hip brace on one leg. The cast from the other leg has been removed recently. His other leg will always be quite stiff, they think. He can move it only about 4 inches when the brace is off. But to think they were able to save both legs is a miracle.

He continues to be in good spirits and has made it to Sunday School and church for 2 Sundays. To get off the hill where they live to their car is a real feat. He has more willpower than anyone I've seen for a long time and is so thoroughly Christian, such a cheerful personality. We're sure God has something for him to do.

~ ~ ~

August 11, 1940

Frog Level, a settlement just one mile from Manchester, our County Seat, is known as a bootlegging community. When folks heard we were starting a weekly Bible School there, they let us know we could expect to be run off.

Our first Saturday afternoon there we had almost 50 children. The Deputy Sheriff was there to help keep order. Someone must have told him we were starting a Bible School. He didn't come back again. Must have thought he could trust us to handle the kids.

One Saturday a boy came so drunk he couldn't walk straight. Little boys were smoking, one not over 5 or 6 years old. One boy told us he has been smoking since he started walking and he can't stop now. His sister, not more than 15, was there with her baby. She kept going over to her brother for puffs of his cigarette. The poor children aren't responsible for their behavior.

I enjoyed teaching the Primary Class. They listened to every word I said. We're meeting out under a big oak tree.

October 6, 1940

Frog Level Bible School is still encouraging. The children come out faithfully. However, the county judge said we may have to start an orphanage instead of a Bible School, as he is jailing all the bootleggers after circuit court. That will include some of the mothers as well as the fathers of our children, he said.

It will be getting cold soon. We were looking to the Lord for a building.

*One day while visiting over there someone told us of an empty house. Said it belonged to Judge Markin. We went back to check it out. We could smell it before we got close enough to peek in the windows. We learned it had been used for a toilet by men who lived across the street. No one had lived in it for months. The neighbors told us that someone had died in each of the last two families who had lived there. Evidently folks were afraid of it. Anyway, we went down to the courthouse and after inquiring we finally found Judge Markin. We asked him about the house. He had all kinds of excuses at first, but finally said we could use it rent free till spring. He added that whatever improvements we would make would stay there.*

*The place was filthy, but our energy combined with that of the children's was equal to it. We began first on the floor. Three of the girls offered to do most of it. We disinfected everything with Lysol and burned sulfur. Next came the job of cleaning the windows. Some we just boarded up because the frames and all the glass had been stolen. Next we tackled the walls, tacking up building paper. It was a real place of activity with 4 or 5 hammers going at once. Some were closing big cracks in the floors. Others were outside pulling weeds. Several boys were cleaning the fireplace.*

*We learned to know the children much better and really had a good time working with them. At one time I counted 16 children working inside.*

*Then last week we put up the heavy building paper on the ceiling.*

*We made seats out of lumber that Mr. Smith gave us. (He has a lumber mill nearby.) We put up curtains and added Bible pictures to the walls. And lastly we bought a new padlock for the door.*

*Our little 2-room chapel was finished and free from invasion, we trust. Our hearts rejoiced in God's answer to our prayers. We were ready for winter!*

*August 18, 1940*

*Martha will soon be going back to school in Fort Wayne and Flo is going to spend the winter with Mary who has been working alone down by Williamsburg. From now on Ann and I will be the team.*

*August 23, 1940*

*Mr. Goins from Beech Creek was instantly killed in the mine Tuesday. Ann had talked to him more than once about his soul but he always kept putting off getting ready to meet God. Now it's too late.*



*However, his tragic going has had a serious effect on many. At the revival last night 16 or 17 came up for prayer.*

*Yesterday some of the little boys at Frog Level got in a fight before we got there – and we were 30 minutes early. One of their mothers heard about it and came over and took her boy home. Some others left too, but we still had 34.*

*Our lesson was about David's Confession. In both Ann's and Martha's classes some spoke up saying they knew from experience what his sin was.*

*Mrs. Shoup, the mother of the little fighting boy, had asked Martha if we would talk to her husband after Bible School was over. We went. One look at Mr. Shoup's eyes was enough to scare anyone away. However, the Lord protected us. We learned that he had been a preacher – a snake handling one. Told us he had handled 15 at one time! He had backslidden five months ago and is living in deep sin. We talked with him, prayed and left some tracts. We're trusting the Lord will continue to deal with him.*

*Here is a note to my pastor's wife, Mrs. Clauser dated August 31, 1940:*

*"Bless the Lord, O my soul and all that is within me, bless His holy name." I'm thanking the Lord for the privilege of serving Him here in the hills. And I thank Him for supplying my needs since I've been here.*

*I considered it a real answer to prayer when that money gift came from you. And then when the stockings came, I was made to thank Him again! A few days before, when Ann was going to Corbin, I asked her to get me some stockings. They were out of the kind I wanted so she didn't get any. But my all-knowing Father knew that the very kind and size I needed were on the way from you. They came in the mail today! I thank Him for the lessons He taught me at Fort Wayne Bible Institute. It makes it easier to trust Him now.*

*September 6, 1940*

*Ann and I have been alone for over a week now. We're getting along just fine, but did hate to see Martha and Flo leave.*

*Last Sunday after our Lockards Creek S.S. we went to a homecoming at Jacks Creek. Jacks Creek is way back in the sticks, but they had a delicious basket dinner and lots of people. After 5 sermons it was time to head home, but our car wouldn't start. Since no one has cars back there, the men didn't know how to help us. However, we finally found a visitor who could help, and we were on our way home!*

*September 15, 1940*

*This is the end of another big weekend. Just got back from Hector. Had good attendances and services at all 3 Sunday Schools.*

*Yesterday we got to Frog Level for our Bible School 30 minutes early. We were informed that there had already been 3 fights. Mrs. Shoup came over in a rage, saying she was going to take some of the kids to court. Ann finally quieted her by saying we would talk to the parents after Bible School. So we had a job! The Lord helped us and protected us.*

*We visited 14 schools last week. To one we had to walk right up the creek. Some places it was so deep we had to lay stones on top of each other to find a place to step. The teachers told us there was a path we could take through the cornfield. Was a lot easier.*

*We visited Lower Laurel High School. The devil tried to intimidate me. I wasn't used to teaching that age. But God helped me and I enjoyed it more than any other school, I believe, unless it was the school with the black kids.*

*The little boy, Orville, at Frog Level who has been smoking as long as he's walked, has been coming back. He seems very interested and very bright. He told us yesterday he didn't like the "Boy Life" Sunday School paper we gave him last week. Said it didn't say enough about Jesus. How hungry the poor boy must be. We pray he will soon find Jesus as his Savior.*

*We certainly are enjoying the apples from our hillside. We've canned applesauce and now have some drying out on our coal shed roof. We've been eating apples for breakfast, dinner and supper, plus some in between.*

*The other day Ann was saying she was hungry for green beans. When we visited the Allen family, Mrs. Allen was out picking green beans they had growing with their corn. She gave us enough for 6 or 7 meals. That's "exceedingly abundant!"*

*Then we were out of tomatoes. Smith's cow had eaten ours, but when we visited Hubbards last week they gave us a big bag of them.*

*Another answer to prayer – I got a letter from home last week with a \$5 bill in it. Also, Mr. Turner's boy came with a ton of coal yesterday! Said a preacher told him to bring it to us!*

*On the way home from Beech Creek yesterday we think we put an end to a fight. Two cars had stopped right in the road. Three girls and that many boys had gotten out to watch 2 others fighting. They seemed to be drunk. We blew our horn and they had to get out of our way. One boy had a smashed hand, the other had a bloody nose and mouth.*



September 22, 1940

*Before I ever started working in Kentucky, I heard there was never a shortage of babies and blackberries in the hills. We found this to be true. We have the most darling babies in all of our Sunday Schools, and we loved the blackberries.*

*At Hector, where most of the folks walked the creek road, we would catch up with the mothers and their children and pick up the smallest ones in our one seated coupe. Sometimes we had as many as 7 little ones under 3 or 4 years. We loved them, and their mothers were greatly relieved to not have to carry them. They were safe since traveling the creek road we had to drive at a crawl speed.*

November 11, 1940

*How time flies! However, we have made good use of it. Ann and I have really been going strong, but winter is coming and we must work while the sun shines. And, too, God has given us the strength and we're glad to use it for Him.*

*We are just closing our public school work – started the last round today. The roads are getting bad and there is other work that must be done.*

*The children are sad when we tell them this is our last visit for this year. Today at the Silver Mine school they all stood up and in unison said, "Thank you, Miss Ann and Miss Lois." Every school had a different way of expressing their thanks and inviting us back.*

*We have 23 schools now. It's encouraging to hear the children recite in unison the 10 or 12 Bible verses we taught to go along with our lessons. We're quite sure some of them have accepted Jesus as their Savior.*

March 3, 1941

*Yesterday (Saturday) the weather was simply awful all day – snow, wind and rain. You can imagine what the roads were like today. We had a good S.S. at Lockards Creek and started for Beech Creek. The road was so bad and it was getting late. We knew we couldn't have walked there and back and get to Hector on time. We decided our good helpers could have S.S. without us. So we came back home, got our dinner and started for Hector.*

*Beech Creek is known for its sticky clay and Hector for its water. The creek was so high that we walked in the fields most of the way from Grandma Hackers' where we had left the car. After we leave the road we have to cross the creek 4 or 5 times before we get to the school house where we have our S.S. When we got to the first crossing we just stood and looked. It seemed impossible, but a Mr. Burns came to our rescue! He put some big blocks of wood in the middle of the stream. We had two little girls, Myrtle and Mattie Asher,*

walking with us. I tried to hand Myrtle to Mr. Burns. It was so far I had to kind of throw her. However, instead of leaving go I went right along with her and stepped in the middle of the creek. It must have been a foot or more deep. I splashed till I got to the other side and was wet to my knees, but we got to the school house alright. They had the fire burning in the pot bellied stove and I was able to dry my legs, but my feet were wet till I got home.

Most of the people who usually walk came on mules. There must have been seven or eight of them and there were two cars from down the creek. Hacker's car got drowned out three times coming through the creek. They had to wait till it dried out. When we all got there we had a good Sunday School.

When we started home, Sallie (one of our main helpers) was crossing the creek on some stones. She slipped on the last stone and fell head first in gravel on the creek bank. She got right up but her face was all bloody. She said she just came "one iota from breaking her neck." I think she really was afraid she had broken it, it hurt her so. We cleaned her up the best we could and put a hankie over the cuts on her face. Then Carlo Hacker, who had just crossed the creek with his family in his Ford, unloaded and backed across the creek and piled us all in. We had a free taxi across the creek!

Sallie went to the closest house to change her clothes and bandage her face better. We certainly hope she'll be alright. At least she didn't break her neck!

It's been a day full of excitement – and it's not over yet – the day I mean. We plan to go to the special service they're having at the Presbyterian Church here at Garrard tonight.

May 6, 1941

Friday after our last day at Vacation Bible School at Hector we had a "working" on the creek road. Our construction crew consisted of 8 boys and about that many girls. The boys used picks, a shovel and a hoe. With the help of the girls we filled the deep holes with rocks from the creek. We found 2 snakes (both small) but, according to the kids, one was a copperhead! We didn't get home till after 6 o'clock. Until we have a big rain, our car won't drag on the bottom as we travel that part of the creek road.

We had just finished supper when Clara and Elsie came over. They were here about 15 minutes when we heard someone on our front porch. Ann went to the door and greeted W.O. and Margaret Wagers. They are a couple from Martins Creek where Clara and Elsie have one of their Sunday Schools. He is the school teacher there, and they both help in the Sunday School. They had been to town and bought a quart of ice cream to share with Clara



*and Elsie. Not finding them home, they decided to share it with us – and were happy to learn that Clara and Elsie were visiting us too. After enjoying the ice cream, we had another treat. We all went into our guest room where we have an old pump organ. For an hour or more we enjoyed singing the old hymns together. It must have been 10 o'clock or later when they left – the end of a perfect day!*

*The next morning, Saturday, we did our weekly housecleaning and worked in the garden before finishing preparation for our Frog Level Bible School. When we tried to start the car to leave, the starter had broken. Elsie took us to Cecil's garage. He came back to Garrard and worked on the starter. Elsie took us to Frog Level and when we got back to Garrard, Cecil told us he couldn't find the part in Manchester. If we wanted the car for our 3 Sunday Schools on Sunday, we'd have to see if we could find the part in London – 25 miles away. Elsie took us, we found the part, Cecil fixed it, and we were able to drive to our Sunday Schools the next day.*

*There was another plus to our trip to London. We needed some black construction paper for our DVBS that was starting Monday afternoon. It wasn't available in Manchester, but we had gotten word that the store in London had gotten it in. We had planned to make the trip there on Monday morning. Providentially, stores in London are open on Saturday nights, and we were able to not only get the starter but to also pick up the black construction paper.*

*September 1, 1941*

*We've done our washing this morning – and I've been up on the hill back of our house. You may remember there is an old orchard up there. I found some apples we'll be using for canning applesauce. We're drying some too.*

*The other evening we found a new peach tree way up in the brush. It had peaches that should be ripe in a few weeks. We found another apple tree too – good eating apples. This surely is an interesting place – no end to our findings and we're especially glad when we find something good to eat! Our missionary hen is on duty every other day now!*

*September 15, 1941*

*We're still going strong with our schools. Looked up a new one yesterday – Willow Grove. We parked our car on the highway and walked 3 miles to the school. They have a real nice school of 75 children and 2 men teachers. They seemed to enjoy our coming. Just drank in the Word.*

*Monday, March 15, 1943*

*Didn't get this written last night – by the time we got home we were ready for bed. Traveling to both Beech Creek and Hector was hard with lots of walking. At Beech Creek we were able to jump across the creek by going some out of our way. The road was impassable in places (even for walking) so we found the mountainside detours again. The same thing happened at Hector Creek. After we got in bed we counted the fences we had to climb – over or under – and there were 30 of them!*

*We had good services though and good attendance, considering the mud, but it was too warm for walking – especially if you're wearing your winter coats as we were. When we left home it was cold, and so foggy we could barely see anything. It's good we were able to drive to Lockards Creek Sunday School or we would have been more tired.*

*Sunday, March 22, 1943*

*We arrived home at 6:30 tonight after another big day with the three Sunday Schools. We're having the most changeable weather. Last Sunday we thought if it would stay nice we might be able to drive part way to Beech Creek and all the way to Hector, but instead we had almost the worst walking of the winter, because it rained and snowed every day after Tuesday.*

*This morning it was frozen on the way out to Beech Creek, but the sun came out really warm. Our feet felt like they weighed 10 lbs. every step – such sticky clay you never saw. We've stood it very well though. Had an interesting day.*

*July 19, 1943*

*Wednesday we visited at Hector. Everywhere we went they were canning beans, so we pitched right in to help prepare them. The Hensleys gave us 2 bushels of apples, so Thursday we canned 14 quart of applesauce. We were surely thankful for them. Then Oddie Hacker gave us 5 heads of cabbage, so we are making kraut.*

*On our way back we stopped in the creek to wash the car. In trying to back up, we got in some quicksand. The harder we tried to get out, the deeper we went with the one back wheel. It was completely submerged with the exception of a few inches of rubber on top. We went to the next house for help. Mr. Chadwell gladly came with his mule and pulled us out, only to find that the tire had gone flat. He put the spare on, and we hurried to see John Henry, one of our Christian mechanics. He discovered the valve stem was partly torn off*



*from the grinding in the sand and gravel. We happened to have an extra one. John Henry soon had us on our way.*

*The creek changes after every hard rain. We always have to guess and take chances that we'll make it alright.*

*Last Thursday evening we started back to Hoskins again to get another gang of little chicks. We drove farther this time, so it wasn't half so bad. Plenty hard on the car though. We have 14 little white balls to play with now. We're surely enjoying them. She says she'll have another gang ready for us this fall.*

1944

The Unruhs came to take over our Beech Creek Sunday School. What a relief it is, especially during the winter, to just have two Sunday Schools. Mrs. Unruh (Valma) wrote the following to me while I was on my Christmas vacation.

*"We know a little about the Kentucky mud – and winter is just starting. I had to laugh at Abe. He took one step and his rubber came off. And then he'd just put it back on and the other would come off. We wonder how you and Ann walked it."*

Note: The Unruhs later got a horse and buggy – almost a necessity with their 2 children,

Tuesday, March 27, 1945

*Will just have time for a card again. We are unusually busy this week. We had charge of a funeral for one of our Hector babies yesterday morning – a new experience for us. It was down the creek. We had to walk several miles to get there. We just got back to Lockards Creek in time for Daily Vacation Bible School, after having dinner with Sally. We'll stop at Pollyann's with some cornbread on the way to Bible School today. She is starting to eat better. Then tomorrow night we go with some others to have a little service in her home. Tomorrow night we plan to be with the Bowlings whose baby died. They want us to 'take the night.' If you don't hear much from me, you'll understand.*

*Sunday services were good, 80 at Lockards Creek, 50 at Hector.*

May 20, 1945

*How the time is flying! Just a little over a week and we should be on our way. It's been a blessing to be kept busy or I know the time would drag so we could hardly stand it. This way we just have to keep moving to get all the little jobs done before we head your way.*

*This has been a real day again. The road to Beech Creek is such a hard one to*

*travel. It's not so much mud now but such awful bumps, big rocks and deep ruts. We just have to stay on the upper ridge, and some places the ridge is so narrow. Had a good attendance at each of the Sunday Schools. I had 23 in the two children's classes combined today at Lockards Creek. Our other children's teacher didn't show up.*

*I guess I didn't tell you of the exciting experience we had last week. Wednesday we went way down the creek and got stuck twice. The last time we had to be pulled out. It happened to be near the only car on the creek. In fact, the people we were going to eat supper with owned it. In crossing the creek, after visiting another of our namesakes, little Anna Lois, Miss Ann stepped on a slippery rock and laid right down in the creek. We had to stop at the next home and hang her skirt out on the line to dry.*

*Then on Saturday we had our Bible School out under the big oak tree again. After the kids were dismissed we had to go down Muddy Gap to turn around. Our car plunged into a deep mud puddle. The back axle and the bumper rested on the surface of the road. It took us about 2 hours and 2 men, besides all kinds of children to get out, but we made it!*

*I know you must be busy. Wish I were there to help you – but I'll be there soon!*

*June 12, 1945*

*We took 20 girls to youth camp this week. They couldn't quit talking about the good time they had and can hardly wait to go back next year. All cried when they had to leave. Best of all, all 20 of them accepted Jesus as their Savior.*

*August 10, 1953*

*Dear Dorcas Circle Friends,*

*I want to let you in on some good news. This past week we had a revival at Beech Creek and 6 of our young people found Christ as their Savior. There were 4 girls and 2 boys between the ages of 14 and 17. They are all young folks we have had in our Sunday School from little up. Two of the girls will be leaving for boarding school on Monday, so we plan the baptismal service for this coming Sunday.*

*You can imagine how happy this makes us. We thank God for His goodness and you for your part in helping us remain in the hills.*

*Our 6 weeks of camp are over for another year. Some weeks we had as many as 60 children. There have been many victories. And now the public schools are starting. By the first of September we'll be visiting them, giving more Bible lessons, and another year of*



*opportunity to learn 200 Scripture verses for a free week at Bible camp.*

*We want to thank you each one for the lovely baby clothes you made for us. We can make very good use of them. There's never a shortage of babies in these hills.*

*May the Lord bless you for your labor of love.*

*Sincerely in Him, Lois*

*July 3, 1954*

*It continues extremely warm – 105 in the shade yesterday. Had a few sprinkles this morning, but we need much more. Everything in our garden is burning up. So glad we got our beans out early and have quite a few canned already. Our corn is shooting ears but without rain they'll never develop. Our later corn too is all curled up. We're thankful to have beets and cabbage to can besides the beans. Made 18 quarts of kraut and 8 pints of beets this morning.*

*We got back from camp yesterday. It was a big busy week. This week Ann, Zick and I were the cooks. I don't think anyone went hungry and all seemed to enjoy their food. With the counselors' help peeling potatoes and cutting cabbage (when it was on the menu) we make out very nicely cooking for 109. Ann thinks she and I could have done it alone. Zick's jobs were primarily making slaw and cocoa. She's a real clown and makes it interesting for us all.*

*Eunice may be needed to cook next camp week. It's Elsie's turn to be teaching.*

*A number found Jesus as their Savior last week, but, out of such a big camp, more went home unsaved than usual. A number dedicated their lives to the Lord. Our missionary was from South America.*

*Hope to see you soon!*

*Thursday, March 27, 1955*

*Ann and I had a big working at camp. Did a lot of grubbing and re-setting of evergreen trees. We were sore from head to foot. Since we'll be in DVBS next week when it's the regular "working day," we got our "work-in" early.*

*July 22, 1955*

*This is another warm day at Emmanuel Bible Camp. We've had 54 fine campers. 39 of them have been here before – 2 of them are 4<sup>th</sup> year campers.*

*Yesterday was field day with all the games and stunts between the Beavers and the Bears. Then the wiener roast came at supper time. The afternoon before, they went for a mountain hike. They had a wonderful time in spite of the heat. Uncle Ben was the scout and had gone ahead and cleared the path, looking out for snakes, etc. Then the campers came along with Uncle Fred as their leader. They saw a beautiful little cave, went up such steep cliffs they had to pull each other up, and climbed over fallen trees. They stopped for wild huckleberries, blackberries and raspberries along the way and came back with nothing worse than scratches and bruises.*

*One of the workers' little boys fell and broke his arm the other day. His Daddy and our Program Director rushed him to the Corbin Hospital. It's a wonder more doesn't happen to the children with their parents so busy.*

*Only a few of the campers don't know Jesus as their Savior.*

*It's almost supper time. I'll have to get cleaned up and get there 15 minutes early, since I am hostess this week.*

*November 12, 1955*

*We went to Beech Creek to make plans for Bev Deaton to come on Tuesday with his truck to take the organ we kept in our guest room to Cotton Bend. We figure they won't miss us so badly if they have an organ to help with their singing. There is a lady who plays by ear. When we told Bev's wife Emma about our plans to leave, she was so surprised – said it would be like losing her right arm.*

*Note: After the Penners came to Beech Creek, Ann and I started a new Sunday School at Cotton Bend.*

*November 20, 1955*

*Today we told the Sunday School folks that we are leaving. They just can't believe it. They say the Sunday Schools can't go on. We're trying to increase their faith in the Lord. It's His work, not ours. There is no reason, if they are faithful to Him, that they won't continue. Brice Hubbard feels especially bad about it. I felt sorry for him. He has been so faithful in building the fire in the schoolhouse all these years and supporting us in every way.*

*December 5, 1955*

*I didn't realize it had been so long since I wrote to you. Really we have been going around in circles. Folks have been in at all times of the day to see about buying our*



*furniture. Most of it is sold – to be picked up just before we leave around December 21. We have a prospect for our refrigerator, but we still have our push lawnmower. Folks are having us out for supper almost every night, and we're practicing with the Sunday School children for 3 Christmas programs after school almost every day.*

*Tonight we have supper with Mollie Smith near Frog Level. You should have heard her cry when we stopped in last week to tell her we were leaving. She is one of the dearest Christians we have ever met. She opened her home to our Frog Level children when we had Vacation Bible School there and has always been a support for our work in her neighboring bootlegging community.*

This is an excerpt from a letter I received a year after we left the hills. It's from Lois Ann Jackson from the Lockards Creek Sunday School. She is one of our young namesakes.

*December 26, 1956*

*Did you have a nice Christmas? I hope so. We had a very nice one, but it didn't seem much like Christmas because we didn't have any Christmas program. We sure do miss you and Miss Anna. You all don't realize how much we do miss you. I didn't think I would miss you as bad as I do until you left. It just seems like one of the family is gone.*

## Changes in Our Family Circle

Our family circle was so closely knit that as a child I thought it could never be broken. But it was. During my second Christmas vacation after I went to Kentucky, it happened.

On Monday night, January 5, 1942, it was very cold and windy outdoors. In fact, it had been below zero night and day for several weeks. But it was cozy and warm in the Menno Gerig living room. Six of us children and our parents made for close fellowship around the Warm Morning stove with the flames glowing through the icing glass in the door. Eunice and Matthias were working in Fort Wayne and Paul in Grand Rapids.

Things suddenly changed when the door opened and in walked Uncle Clarence. He lived in the farm home ¼ mile up the road. He was as white as a sheet. The message he brought had come over WOWO, the Fort Wayne radio station. The newsman had said a 19-year-old skater had drowned in the St. Mary's River. His name was Matthias Gerig from Auburn, son of Menno and Zula Gerig.

Our lives all took a new direction that night. Father and Mother made the 4 mile trip to the Walters Funeral Home in Spencerville, making arrangements for our brother's body to be brought to Spencerville. After they left, I vividly remember the rest of us kneeling by the stove and asking God to take good care of our brother. Heaven had never seemed so close. Part of "us" was there!

The Fort Wayne papers told the details. Our brother was trying out some new skates he had gotten for Christmas. The ice in the river was very thick; however, a country boy wouldn't know there were thin spots where the city drainage came out.

It took several hours to recover his body, but we knew that long before they found it he was safe with Jesus! He had trusted Him as his Savior years earlier. "To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord" (II Corinthians. 5:8). What a comfort! Our family circle had changed. Matthias was in heaven.

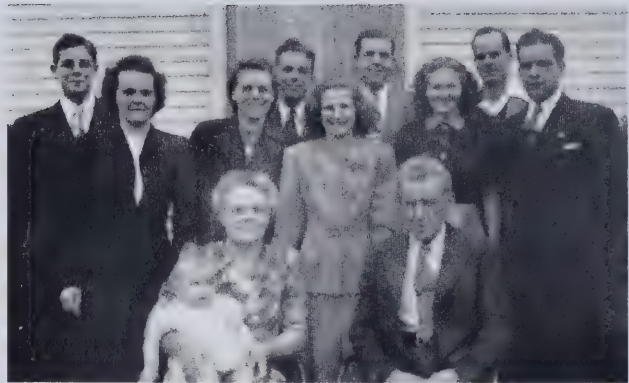
But our family down here was growing. Paul had met Mary in England during World War II. He returned after peace was signed and they were married. A few years later little Janet joined our circle. Then Maurice and Pat were married.

Later there were more weddings: Zenas married Esther, Dale married Beth, Adah Ruth married John, Ardon married Rosemary, Eunice married Earl, and I married Duane.



Eleven more nieces and nephews made their appearance.

It was 29 years before our circle was broken again. On February 18, 1971, Mother joined our brother in Heaven. From our viewpoint it was unexpected. She had gone to her family doctor for a routine visit. However, just before reaching there, her walking became unsteady. The doctor recognized there was



Family Picture 1948

a problem and called the hospital to reserve a bed for her. She undressed herself and crawled into bed before having a massive stroke. In six hours, she was in heaven. Her first experience of being a patient in a hospital was cut short. Her leaving us so suddenly was a shock, but we all realized that for her it was a blessing.

And it wasn't unexpected from heaven's viewpoint. Mother had been asked to speak at the Mother-Daughter Banquet at her church that Saturday night. She was asked to tell about how she, as a teenager, had heard God speak to her, asking her if she was willing to have children. She answered, "Yes, Lord, a dozen if it would help me to live closer to you."

Those of the committee who were in prayer meeting that Wednesday night were shocked when, as Mother stood during testimony time, she told about God speaking to her so many years before. They didn't know then that they'd have to find another speaker for Saturday night. Mother would be enjoying the bliss of heaven!

Eunice was the next to break the family circle after an extended struggle with melanoma malignancy. On March 12, 1978, she entered heaven. The close tie she and I had was broken. God had foreseen my need and had brought Duane into my life. What a blessing he was – and still is!

Then it was our father's turn, when on August 19, 1982 without a struggle he died in his sleep. He had prayed and even asked us to pray that he would never have to go to the hospital or a nursing home or never need to stay with any of his children. God abundantly answered!

After living alone for eleven years, he and Mother were re-united. It was the first night any of us felt it necessary to stay with him. Ardon had taken him to a new doctor that day, not because he was sick but his family doctor had gone to industrial medicine, and he

needed to be replaced.

Father had had a long wait in the waiting room and another long wait in the office before the doctor came. He was worn out. The doctor checked his heart. It was beating irregularly. He told Ardon he didn't think he was long for this world. Ardon decided he should stay with him. Father laid down to rest as soon as he got home, and at 10:30 after going to the bathroom, he told Ardon he was feeling all right. He should go home. Ardon must have been inspired by God when he answered, "I think God wants me to stay with you tonight." Father still expected us to mind him, but he wasn't one to quarrel with God.

Father went back to bed. Ardon checked on him at 6:00 in the morning, and he was gone! He had lived 97 healthy years down here. Now he was enjoying heaven forever.

Ardon was the next to join them after an only 30-day notice that he even had a problem. It was a fast growing brain tumor. That was on March 9, 1995.

And then there was Maurice on September 5, 1999. For 10 years he had struggled with Parkinson disease. No more struggles now!

The last to leave our immediate circle was Paul on June 22, 2004. He had lived a fulfilled life in spite of struggling with cancer of the bladder for several years.

Two from the next generation have already joined our family circle in Heaven. Dale and Beth's son Kenton made it safely there on April 1, 1979, after a 5 or 6 year struggle with cancer. He was only 23 years old.

Ruthie and John's oldest son Keith left us very unexpectedly after a tragic auto accident March 2, 1977 when he was only 19 years old.

Two of our in-laws have already reached heaven. Eunice's husband Earl joined her on July 10, 1990 and more recently Maurice's wife Pat joined him on March 20, 2006.

Our immediate family circle is now bigger in heaven than it is down here. Wouldn't it be nice if the trumpet would sound and we (with all our spouses and nieces and nephews) could go together? "Even so come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20b).

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And now for the rest of my Journey, God only knows what it holds. But one thing I know, I won't be alone. Jesus has promised "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." I trust Him!

### This I Know

*The Lord knoweth them that are His" (II Timothy 2:19)*

I do not know what next may come  
Across my pilgrim way,  
I do not know tomorrow's road  
Nor see beyond today,  
BUT THIS I KNOW – *My Savior knows*  
*The path I cannot see,*  
*And I can trust His wounded hand*  
*To guide and care for me.*

I do not know what may befall  
Of sunshine or of rain.  
I do not know what may be mine  
Of pleasure or of pain.  
BUT THIS I KNOW – *My Savior knows,*  
*And whatsoe'er it be,*  
*Still I can trust His love to give*  
*What will be best for me.*

I do not know what still awaits  
Or what the morrow brings,  
But with the glad salute of faith  
I hail its opening wings!  
BUT THIS I KNOW – *That in My Lord*  
*Shall all my needs be met,*  
*And I can trust the heart of Him*  
*Who has not failed me yet.*

E. Margaret Clarkson

### **Acknowledgments**

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Most of all I give my heartfelt thanks to Jesus. Without Him there would be no story.















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